

## **The Response to the Challenges of *Amoris Laetitia*, A Youth's Perspective**

Nowadays, situations have become demanding given the state of affairs of our social environment. Youth is said to be the most challenging stage of one's growth and development. Dramatic changes transpire while navigating ways to address the calls of the time. As the "fair hope of the nation", the youths' performance dictates what the future holds. However, studies have shown that one's surroundings play a vital role as to how life is managed. Hence, it is noteworthy to consider the Papal's Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*, in affirming the teachings of the Church and its role in encouraging a stable family towards growth and development.

Philippines is known to have a collectivist nature mirroring the church is a "family of families" (80). Nonetheless, with the widespread western mentality, contemporary Filipino youth have been influenced with individualistic tendencies such that comfort is gained at construing the self alone yet at least are still mindful of a coherent whole. The Pope remarked that rampant individualism makes it difficult today for a person to give oneself generously to another (cf. AL 33). Filipino youth are well-rounded with the different backgrounds they present and are presented with. Some are resilient enabling them to muster enough inner courage and the capacity for restoration that keep them from falling apart. Resilience, however, is not universal and definitely not inexhaustible. Another source of strength is that of spirituality, one that offers a form of protection and comfort especially during trying times of unfavorable circumstances. Filipino youth is armed with the strengths to weather the storm to stand up to the challenges of the exhortation.

## **Poverty: a major factor challenging Filipino families**

Recently, the number of children and families living in the streets rose at a very significant value. We can see dwellers at areas where harm is just around the corner. In the Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey, conducted between March 30 and April 2, 2016, 46% that is equivalent to 10.5 million families rated themselves poor. At the height of extreme poverty, children are engaged in crime, human trafficking and prostitution for their families. Families cannot avoid experiencing "difficulty of raising children, tendency of seeing an older person as a burden, and an increase of emotional problems and outbreaks of violence" which in turn destabilizes the family.

On the other hand, we might as well look into a non-conventional perspective of what poverty is at present. As the Holy Father stated, "the great poverty of contemporary culture is loneliness, arising from the absence of God in a person's life and the fragility of relationships." When this idea creeps into the minds of the youth, we take into consideration a highlighted concept of the Pope's exhortation: consumerism. Nowadays, we are fed into the belief that riches are all about what we can have materially neglecting the more important aspects of life that can never be satiated by mere earthly belongings.

## **Migration, a Philippine phenomenon**

Another contributory factor that weakens the foundation of Filipino families is migration. Due to the lack of employment opportunities, Filipino workers still aspire on migrating and working abroad compromising their safety and even the status of their family. "With the culture of migration, the Filipino families dramatically suffer separation and ruinously affect the serenity of family life<sup>25</sup>. In the country, families are even devastated by rampant illegal recruitment and human trafficking. (par. 46; response)

## **Education to faith**

In a family, parents are children's teacher of faith. This presents a challenge for families to teach Christian values that are time-bound like that of forgiveness.

Education of children include their ethical formation, the learning of discipline which can include punishment, patient realism, sex education, passing on the faith and, more generally, family life as an educational context.

## **Youth and marriage**

A research shows that as we entered the year 2000, more and more Filipino youth delay getting married and that in a series of nationwide surveys namely "Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study (YAFS), today's youth are imbibing a more liberal mind-set such as settling to live-in arrangements not considering the sacrament of matrimony.

Mapusok man ang mga kabataan noon, mas mapusok na sa ngayon. The towering level of curiosity allows us to explore risky endeavors like that of engaging in pre-marital sex.

With these mentioned challenges to the Filipino families, it is now more than ever that we are called to allow ourselves to be transformed in Christ through a life lived "according to the Spirit". Our Pope offers us a renewed perspective that should widen our horizon in understanding what marriage and family entail. We are reminded that "only in contemplating Christ does a person come to know the deepest truth about human relationships". Jesus is an epitome of how we ought to communicate with gentleness for in this manner, we imbibe the essence of love. Christ himself is a living sign God's unconditional love that is to be cultured in every family. "The experience of love in families is a

perennial source of strength for the life of the Church.” Responding to the vocation of the family is for the good of the Church and for the society as a whole. The love that we experience in our family enables us to transcend ourselves while allowing mutual happiness for those whom we encounter. It is love that permits us to interact with humility. Love can be more than what we can imagine.

In conclusion, the idea of only being able to make an impact when you're already old enough has been disproven by several youths of this generation. The youth should assert to take a stand to respond to these challenges. In what ways? Cliché as it may seem to be but it always start with the self, imploring the aid of the Almighty. Be informed and speak out. The voice of the youth has never been this loud and it gives young people an edge to expression. We, the youth, should rise to spread the word of truth about the present realities. About how things went from worse to worst. About how people, regardless of age and other stereotypical societal standards, can help with spreading the word, being creative, taking initiatives and more. And then from this point, maybe, just maybe, when more people are informed, when more people are aware, we can create one big stand and one strong movement with our little capabilities put together.

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As Filipinos, we are known for being resilient in times of tremendous difficulties and so is reflective of what the Pope pertains, “I thank God that many families, which are far from considering themselves perfect, live in love, fulfill their calling and keep moving forward, even if they fall many times along the way”.

## **Response: A Youth's Perspective**

The youth now faces a responsibility of overcoming the typical behavior of its social groups on today's time. We may not be thinking much about what will matter many years from now, but it is essential for us to figure out a link between our implicit obligation to belong to our own social groups, its impact on today's issues, and more importantly, its unparalleled value to self-actualization if directed properly.

It is a challenge for a family to build a tender and loving environment that allows growth. Hence, it is only proper for the youth to direct its own expression of individuality into something that benefits more than the self. In doing so, we have to achieve fusion of horizons to pave way into a dialogue and cooperation.

Our cultural atmosphere changes every now and then. There are innovations in many different disciplines: media, arts, literature, science, technology, and others. It is not only for the purpose of giving in, devolving, and involving oneself in consumerism. This calls for something that is equally moving and dynamic, of which are political and social changes.

Advancements are not meant for the youth to regress. Consider the subject on mental health, an interesting subject for the youth today. Most of us seem to be advocate of such. We utilize social media in raising our own accounts of it, to say that it is real and that it is being experienced. While it is an excellent platform to address the issue on the objective of raising awareness, only when we become genuinely sensitive of the people around us, do we realize the value of being one with the campaign. This tells us that it is not enough to only be posting it on facebook, tweeting about its whatnots, that it is not a race of who has more problems or who has it worse. It might be about hearing them and making yourself available in times of need. This takes a lot of discernment and

integration to actualize, that more than the guidance being available, you are putting your words into action – a simplified “Theory into practice”. It goes the same way with even bigger issues such as poverty, where one can only appreciate the viewpoint of the poor and the marginalized when they go outside their idealistic judgement of “laziness equals poverty”, when they actually integrate themselves with low wage earners like farmers or garbage collectors having incomparable workloads, do they rethink about what the root cause is. There are a lot of “what could have been” in a single situation alone. This takes us back to the value of discernment, understanding and integration, to guidance and actual solutions. It is now more than ever that the Church’s prophetic role to educate consciences is to be highlighted especially to us, the vulnerable youth in the midst of these crucial days when what we consider as a truth is warped. Until then do we come to a realization that not every verdict applied during the past, remained and did not revolve and adapt to current times. With these in mind, it presents a challenge for families to be more tender, allow and value both the individual and collective expressions of each time-distinguished cultures. When ease of relationship with each other is attained while self-fulfillment is uncompromised, what more could come close to self-actualization that caters every members of the family, one that undoubtedly emanates compassion, one that brings out “the joy of love”.