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THE JOY OF LOVE

As we all know, today the world is desperately craving for joy and peace. The awful developments being witnessed these days like war, terroristic attacks, religious fanaticism, homicides, child abuses, women trafficking etc., are really threats to humanity. The root cause of the present crises in the world is due to lack of true love. As a prophetic voice, time and again Pope Francis speaks of the importance and relevance the law of love. In order to build up a better society it is indispensable to nurture true and genuine love in family which is the basic unit of the society. Conscious of this fact, Pope Francis directs his special attention on family. This is what he had articulated in his recent post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love). This document was signed on March 19, 2016 which is the outcome of the two Synods on the family convoked in 2014 and 2015. It contains 9 chapters with 326 paragraphs. At first he invites to open the Scriptures to find out the success stories of family relationship. He then cautions the various issues and imminent dangers especially 'me first' culture that will adversely affect the healthy family relationship. Pope Francis then recalls the teachings of the Church on family. In order to build up ideal families, Pontiff reiterates to maintain genuine love between couples and with their children. The parents are duly reminded of their natural obligation of procreation and education of the children. Pope Francis then accentuates the Church's obligation to provide proper pastoral care for all families. The document concludes with a brief discussion of family spirituality.

Through this lengthy document Pope Francis wants to see joy in the eyes of all especially among all the members of the family. Pope Francis definitely understands the spiritual and corporal struggles in the family. In any case joy can be restored if there is genuine love. Citing the letter of St. Paul to the first Corinthians 13, he confirms that LOVE CONQUERS ALL and it lasts forever. If there is love there is joy. Hence Pope Francis says about 'Joy of Love'.

The Holy Family of Nazareth continue to show a beautiful example to all those who are called to family life. The Gospels of Mathew and Luke enumerate the struggles and agonies of Mary and Joseph from the moment of their betrothal till their death. In midst of all their hardships and anguishes they learned to extend genuine love for each other. They embraced their daily cross with profound love. There were no rooms for complaining to God or against each other. There

were no moments where they felt discouragements to carry out their vision and mission. Since they did everything with love they found joy even amidst terrible sorrows.

Certainly this document refers to the biological families. Through this document, Pope Francis directly intends and teaches to the catholic families. Can the members of Vincentian Family learn anything from this document of '*Amoris laetitia*'? Of course, the members of Vincentian Family are related to each other not due to consanguinity. But they are united together as one spiritual family due to the possession of a common charism. The message elucidated in the document can be applied analogically. The members of the Vincentian Family, in their endeavour to build the family of God by means of the evangelization of the poor, confront many challenges and struggles, which may emerge either from *ad intra* (with-in) or from *ad extra* (with-out). If the members are animated by the genuine love whatever be the hindrances they will continue to be faithful to their charism. They will always find joy in being and becoming a member of the Vincentian Family.

Christmas once again reminds the great love of God. God is love (1 Jn 4: 8). He loved the world so much so that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (Jn 3: 16). In order to redeem the mankind Jesus emptied himself and took the human nature (Phil 2: 7). He preferred to be born in a manger (Lk 2: 7). The love moved him to offer even the last drop of his blood for mankind (Jn 15:13). Jesus gives a beautiful example to find 'joy of love'. Let this Christmas help us as Vincentians to imitate Christ's 'Kenosis' and thereby to experience 'joy of love'. I take this opportunity to wish you a Merry Christmas and praying for you to have that joy and peace especially all through the ensuing year and in all your spiritual efforts.



“Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again
and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy” (Jn 16: 22)



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