



TOWARDS A HOLISTIC MORALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN HOME

ABSTRACT

“Home,” with all its complexity, has been invariably studied in recent years. Unfortunately, little to none has been explored on this topic in relation to theology, except those studies that connect it to the concept of “church” or more specifically to Christian “family” as the “domestic church in the home.”¹ Conversely, the Council Fathers of Vatican II clamored for the renewal of moral theology from “an isolated, individualistic, act-oriented, and sin-oriented approach” to a “personalistic approach to morality and the moral life.”² Thus, this paper is an attempt to investigate the deeper understandings of home in order to adopt an alternative morality model by re-appropriating Charles Curran’s personalist-responsibility model that applies to the daily life experiences in Christian homes.

Keywords: Discernment, Family, Home, Human Affectivity, Oikos/Oikia, Personalist Morality Model, Relationships, Responsibility

¹Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of the Holy Father Francis, On Love In The Family*, no. 15 (Pasay City, Philippines: Paulines Publishing House, 2016), 9.

²Richard M. Gula, S.S., *Reason Informed by Faith* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1989), 28.



INTRODUCTION

Before the Church gained the official authority in teaching matters of faith and moral life, groups of families had started living out an authentic Christian life in their private homes during the time of the disciples. In fact, the Church drew inspiration from the group's daily communal faith-practices in the formulation of its standard instructions on Christian belief and morality. Centuries later, the Church has become the primary, if not the only, source of all Christian families in living out an authentic moral life. To guide its members to genuine Christian living, the Church has prepared "manuals of moral theology [which] stress the essentialist, universalist and deductive approach to moral theology."³

But "the moral manuals were criticized for concentrating too much on reason, on natural law, as the way to know the purpose of God and to live in communion with God."⁴ Even the two moral approaches of the Church, namely *deontological* and *teleological*,⁵ tend to be too legalistic and rationalistic as they focus more on an individual's sinful act rather than on his or her whole being. Regrettably, many of the Christian Catholics today, who are radically affected by modernity and technological advancement, find the two approaches as disciplinary rather than formative in deepening their faith in God and in their loving relationship with Him and others. With this challenge, this paper attempts to respond to the Council Fathers' call for an alternative model in understanding Christian morality by utilizing the perspective of Christian home experiences.

³Charles E. Curran, *The Catholic Moral Tradition Today: A Synthesis* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1999), 21.

⁴Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith*, 46.

⁵Deontological approach to morality focuses on laws, duties, and obligation while the teleological approach "emphasizes goals or ends. Something is good if it brings you to goal and bad if it prevents you from attaining that goal." See Charles Curran, *A New Look at Christian Morality* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Fides Publisher, Inc., 1968), 169.

UNDERSTANDING HOME FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

Semantic Analysis of Home

The Jews view “home” as תיב (bayit) or “house” in English which designates the community,⁶ the people of Israel,⁷ or simply the “household.” However, תיב (Bayit) in Greek is οἶκος (oikos) or οἰκία (oikia), which refers to the physical building for dwelling, material resources and production, property and land, and the members of the households that “encompass the immediate and extended family, slaves and freed persons, servants and workers, as well as tenants and business clients (and even ‘household gods’).”⁸ The Romans, on the other hand, have a different view of the “household” which they refer as *familia* or *domus* which Cicero defined by a “relationship of domination and dependence, not kinship.”⁹ Incidentally, the Filipinos differentiate a house (*bahay*) from home (*tahanan*). They view *tahanan* as having deeper psychological, social, emotional, and spiritual meaning than *bahay*, which merely refers to a physical structure built on specific land or location. As Bishop Pablo Virgilio S. David shares, “It is one thing to build a house and another to make a home. Alas, not every house is a home.”¹⁰ Also, *tahanan* is linked to another Filipino word *tahan*, which could mean “cessation” or to “cease from crying.”

Other Understandings of Home

Home is basically associated with a permanent structure such as the house, room, or shelter. In effect, it serves as “a sacred place, a secure place and a place of certainty and of stability.”¹¹

⁶Herman Hendrickx, *The Household of God, The Communities Behind the New Testament Writings* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publication, 1992), 5.

⁷Luke Timothy Johnson, “The Church as God’s Household,” in *The Bible Today*, Vol.40, No.4 (July 2002): 224.

⁸Hendrickx, *The Household of God*, 4.

⁹Ibid.; See also Michael Crosby, *House of Disciple: Church, Economics, & Justice in Matthew* (New York, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), 27.

¹⁰Pablo Virgilio S. David, DD, “The House of the Word: The Church,” *MST Review* 10, no.2 (2008): 69.

¹¹Kimberly Dovey, “Home and Homelessness: Introduction,” Altman, Irwin and Carol M. Werner, eds., in *Home Environments. Human Behavior and Environment: Advances in Theory and Research*, Vol. 8, (New York: Plenum Press, 1985), 3.

However, home as a place is “not just a piece of ground – it is [an] undeniable fact of our existence in relationship with the whole of creation.”¹² For this reason, most human beings have developed a strong attachment or personal bond to a home-place. Ti Fu Tuan calls this “affectionate bonds between people and places” as *topophilia*.¹³ This bond molds the person’s self-identity as emphasized by Frank McAndrew who said that “our sense of the place we live is closely tied to our sense of who we are.”¹⁴

Nevertheless, these ideas of self-identity and self-extension also relate to an individual’s experience of belongingness to the home-place. Therefore, a home is a place where one belongs to a group of persons or a community. Human beings experience belongingness and strong affection to their home-place, turning home into an “emotional warehouse.”¹⁵ As Peter Somerville intimates, “[h]ome as *heart* is... emotional rather than physiological security and health, with associated images of a happy and stable home founded on relations of mutual affection and support.”¹⁶

Above all these, one’s identity, security, belongingness, and emotional attachments in the home-place are all constitutive of the support and presence of the human persons living in the home. Citing Rose, Hazel Easthope argues that “[home-places] have no inherent meanings, only the meanings given to them by humans.”¹⁷ In the same thought, R. D. Sack maintains that “places

¹²Ruth Anne Irvin, “Redeeming Home: A Christian Theology of Place in a Placeless World,” 77, <http://equip.sbts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/08-Redeeming-Home-A-Christian-Theology-of-Place-in-a-Placeless-World.pdf> (accessed June 28, 2018).

¹³Yi Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitude, and Values* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 2-10.

¹⁴Frank T. McAndrew, “Home Is Where the Heart Is, but Where Is ‘Home?’” in *Psychology Today*, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/out-the-ooze/201508/home-is-where-the-heart-is-where-is-home> (accessed October 16, 2018).

¹⁵See C. Gurney, “I [love] Home: Towards a More Affective Understanding of Home,” *Proceedings of Culture and Space in Built Environments: Critical Directions/New Paradigms*, 33-39.

¹⁶Peter Somerville, “Homelessness and the Meaning of Home: Rooflessness or Rootlessness?” in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol. 16, 4 (1992), 532. *Italics not supplied*.

¹⁷Hazel Easthope, *Place Called Home*, 130, citing G. Rose, “Place and identity: a sense of place,” in *A Place in the World?: Places, Cultures and Globalization*, D. Massey and P. Jess, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 88-98.

cannot exist without us [people]. But equally important, we cannot exist without places.”¹⁸ Truly, it depends on the person who creates a place or space which s/he can call a home where “even the homeless [can] have a home.”¹⁹

Understandings of Home in Church Documents

There are three prevailing understandings of home analyzed from the different Catholic Church documents: Home is mother earth; Home is humans’ eternal resting place or final abode; and home is related to the “family” as the “domestic church in the home.”²⁰ The first concept of home as a fixed physical location can also be related to land. Many indigenous peoples in the different parts of the world regard the land that they live, the earth as a whole, as their home. More so with the Hebrew people in biblical times who consider their land as an important gift of God to them. Land reminded these people of their origins - how the Lord God created them. The book of Genesis vividly explains how human beings were formed: “you are dust, and to dust, you shall return” (Gen.3:19).²¹ Even the word “human” comes from the Latin word *humus*, which means “soil” or “dust.”²²

¹⁸R.D. Sack, “Place, Power and the Good,” P. C. Adams, S. Hoelscher, and K. E. Till, eds., in *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 233. Cf. Hazel Easthope, “A Place Called Home,” 130.

¹⁹Somerville, *Homelessness and the Meaning of Home*, 529.

²⁰See Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium* (18 November 1965) § 11, in *Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. A. Flannery (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1980); John Paul II. *Familiaris Consortio*, Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, (Philippines, Pasay City: Paulines Publishing House, 1981), §21; *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines*, (Philippines, Pasay City: Paulines Publishing House, 1992), § 51-52; *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (Manila: Episcopal Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines and Word & Life Publications, 1997), §1375; Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conference, FABC Paper no. 111, §15; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (United States: United States Catholic Conference, Inc. Paulist Press, 1994), §501.

²¹All Scriptural passages quoted in this paper are based on the *Revised Standard Version Bible* (USA: Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ, 1989), <https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-Revised-Standard-Version-Catholic-Edition-NRSVCE-Bible/> (accessed November 8, 2018).

²²See Walter Brueggeman, *Genesis: Interpretation, A Biblical Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982).

Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* quotes Saint Francis of Assisi to stress the fact that “our planet is a homeland and that humanity is one people living in a common home.”²³ The Pope asserts that “our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us.”²⁴ We are then challenged to take good care of the land and make it a better place to live in.

The second common concept of a home is still related to land but goes beyond the physical place and space, as mentioned beforehand. It is viewed as an eternal abode or final dwelling place for all humans when they die. As Jesus assured His people, “In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?” (John 14:2). The last concept of the home, which is so popular among Catholic theologians, is linked to the family as the “domestic church.” The family like the Church can transmit gospel messages to its members forming them toward authentic Christian living. The family then as the “Church in the home” is the “basic unit of the Christian life,”²⁵ “where children and young people can receive an authentic catechesis.”²⁶

BIBLICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF HOME

Home in the Old Testament

Home can also be understood in the context of a house which in Hebrew is **תיב** (*bayit*) or *beth*. Luke Timothy Johnson expounds the term house which “was used already in Jewish Scripture as a way of designating the people of Israel.”²⁷ The “house of Israel” then does not only refer to the physical structure where the Jews lived, and where goods were produced and stored. More significantly, it denotes members of the household such

²³Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home* (USA: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, May 24, 2015), § 164.

²⁴*Ibid.*, § 1.

²⁵PCP II, § 48.

²⁶FC, § 52.

²⁷Johnson, *The Church as God’s Household*, 224.

as the husband, “wife and children, servants and resident aliens [who] are all included in the house in the Old Testament.”²⁸ “Later the people of Israel as people of God,” as Punt declares, “would become known as *Yahweh-bêt*, the household of God.”²⁹ Hence, “all households are linked together in the ‘household of God’³⁰ “where heaven and earth meet and the Divine Presence specially dwells.”³¹ Interestingly, this concept of “in-dwelling Presence of God” gives another layer of understanding to the biblical home. Biblical exegetes associate the word “to dwell” to “pitching the tent” where, in the patristic period, the God of Israel or Yahweh was assumed to dwell. Later, the Israelites built a fixed sacred place, which is the temple or synagogue where they experience God and His Divine Presence.

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (ISBE) also describes the word “dwell” in the Old Testament as *yashabh* and *shakhan*. *Yashabh* can be translated as “to sit down”³² while *Shakhan* or *shakhen* means “to settle down,” from which rooted from the rabbinic word *shekhinah* (literally, ‘that which dwells’) or the light on the mercy-seat which symbolized the Divine presence (Exodus 25:8, etc.).³³ Moreover, the term “to dwell” is related to another Hebrew word *banah*, which means “to build.” *Shekhinah* and *banah* are directly associated with a house where the former is related to the word “dwell” while the latter is connected to building or constructing a house. In fact, God is seen as the “builder” of nature, and His dwelling presence is felt in nature and in all His creation. Creation as God’s home was first noted by Gregory of Nyssa, who

²⁸A.R. Johnson, “The Power of the Oikos,” <http://www.thaicrc.com/collect/MIS/index/assoc/D4913.dir/4913.pdf> (accessed June 25, 2018).

²⁹Jeremy Punt, “‘All in the Family?’ The Social location of New Testament Households and Christian Claims on ‘Traditional Family Values,’” *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 21, 2 (2010): 8.

³⁰Herman Hendrickx, *The Household of God*, 129.

³¹Donald Rappe, “Households of the People of the Household of God,” *The Joy of the Gospel in The Bible Today*, Vol. 52, No. 5 (September /October 2014), 287.

³²James Orr, “Entry for ‘DWELL,’” in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (1915).

³³*Ibid.*

referred to “creation as a ‘royal lodging’ in the fourth century.”³⁴ And now in the twenty-first century, [Pope] Francis takes the metaphor a step further by speaking of ‘Our Common Home.’³⁵ Consequently, this has led to a view of ecology as “the study of the household of the planet.”

Home in the New Testament

God did not solely dwell in creation, in the house of the Jews, or in their sacred temple. Through the mystery of His overall plan of salvation, God concretized His dwelling presence in the human form of his son Jesus, who was “the word made flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). As Robert A. Jonas claims, “Jesus in whom the fullness of God dwells has become our home. By making his home in us, he allows us to make our home in him.”³⁶ Truly Jesus as home is the Word (John 1.14) and Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1.24) who was born, lived, and dwelt among us with a great plan of “leading all the hearers and believers to prepare themselves to return back home to the Father (Jn. 14:2-6) [to be with Him in the] eternal dwelling place.”³⁷ He is the living cornerstone, the very foundation of the house of God (1 Cor. 3:9 f) who “established *his* new household, the church, as the new entrance into the Kingdom of God.”³⁸

It is also interesting to note that Jesus did most of his earthly and public ministry by visiting the homes of the Jews. Most often, he visited the homes of sinners, the sick, the outcast, and the believers of God. He also used the home experience as a place of conversion, forgiveness, and healing. He even used parables about

³⁴Gregory of Nyssa, “On the Making of Man,” in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Series Gregory of Nysa Dogmatic Treatises, etc., ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans Henry Austin Wilson, Vol 5 (New York Christian Literature Company, 1893), 390 as cited by Charles P. Arand, “Trending Our Common Home, Reflections on *Laudato Si*,” in *Concordia Journal*, (Fall 2015), 308.

³⁵Arand, *Trending Our Common Home*, 308.

³⁶Jonas, *Henri Nouwen, Writings Selected*, 5.

³⁷Xavier Leon-Duffour, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, P. Joseph Cahill SJ, trans. (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1962), 217.

³⁸Crosby, *House of Disciples*, 52.

home to educate the hearers about their faith in God and in teaching them the good news. Actually, this strategy of doing house-to-house teaching of the gospels is termed as οἶκος *evangelism*,³⁹ which was first initiated by Jesus Himself by doing gospel ministry.⁴⁰ By applying οἶκος *evangelism*, He was able to convert one member of the house who later on influenced the whole household. This gospel approach was copied and patterned the approach of the disciples of Jesus, which consequently increased the number of Christian believers.

St. Paul signifies home in two differing ways. He designates home as οἶκος or οἰκία as having the same meaning, that is, “the household together with its persons and property... Both words were used for the dwelling, the family, or the kin.”⁴¹ This simply means that the understanding of the word “home” goes beyond the physical structure. It actually refers to the household members who belong to the family of God not by blood relations but through personal spiritual affiliation. In this context, the concept of the family goes beyond the present traditional definition set by the Catholic Church as simply composed of father, mother, and children. In a wider scope then, the notion of family transcends relationship by blood, marriage or legal adoption, for everyone is kin to one another. Furthermore, οἶκος was “the basic social unit by which the church grew.”⁴² As Michael Crosby posits, “when one considers the meaning of ‘church’ in the first century, it cannot be

³⁹Rob Rienow, “Ministry in the Oikos Source,” accessed June 30, 2018, <http://visionaryfam.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Ministry-in-the-Oikos.pdf>.

⁴⁰These are instances where Christ did the gospel ministry in the household: “Jesus goes to the house of Simon Peter where he heals Peter’s mother-in-law who then serves them (Mk 1:29-31). In a house in Capernaum, Jesus heals a paralytic (Mk 2:1-12) and has a meal with Levi (Mk 2:15). After calling of the twelve, we read: “And he went home (literally: and he went into the house) and the crowd came together again so that they could not have anyone know it; yet he could not even eat” (Mk 3:20). Again in a house at Capernaum, he puts to shame his disciples for their discussing with one another who is the greatest (Mk 9:33-34). We are told that the last stations before Jesus’ passion are the house of Simon the leper where he is anointed by a woman (Mk 14:3), and the guest room in the house in which Jesus celebrated his farewell meal with the men and women who were his disciples (Mk 14:14-15).” See Hendrickx, *The Household of God*, 13.

⁴¹Hendrickx, *The Household of God*, 3.

⁴²Ibid.

divorced from the household. ... Obviously, the apostolic church can never be properly understood without bearing in mind the contribution of the house churches.”⁴³

THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF HOME

Home is not just a physical structure, a place to live or a space that is created in an individual’s mind to experience comfort, security, belongingness, and acceptance. Home becomes truly a home because of the people who establish or create a special bond or relationship with the place, space, land or with fellow humans and, most of all, with God in the person of Jesus Christ. Home then is about initiating a *relationship* and establishing a bond or attachment with others, *i.e.* God, humans and non-human entities such as place, location or space in order to experience security, safety, comfort, and belongingness. Here, the paper explores the importance of relationship in bringing out the theological implications of home based on the Sacred Scriptures and Church teachings.

Human Persons Are Relational Beings.

The *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (CFC) describes the human person as a relational, social being.⁴⁴ It is his or her nature to socialize or to relate with others in all aspects of life. In addition, the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* intimates that “[a]s God did not create man [and woman] for life in isolation, but for the formation of social unity... S/He has chosen men [and women] not just as individuals but as members of a certain community.”⁴⁵ As a social being, a human person relates to others

⁴³Crosby, *House of Disciples*, 32. On a deeper level, this is one of the arguments that this article also wants to develop. Before the Church holds the official teachings on moral theology, there were these groups of Christian families who shared common experiences on how to live authentic Christian moral lives. Isn’t it time to listen to the wisdom of these ordinary Christian families on their thoughts about present moral issues that affect the Christian home itself?

⁴⁴See CFC, § 687.

⁴⁵GS, § 32.

through his/her bodies, for s/he is an “embodied spirit” composed of “body” and “soul.”⁴⁶ Nonetheless, a human is not only a “body” but also a person, not just an object to be used, abused or taken advantage of.

Likewise, as relational and historical beings, the human persons are “unique, yet fundamentally equal.”⁴⁷ People may indeed differ in many ways but being created by God in His image and likeness, they share the same dignity (Gen. 1:26). Therefore, all people are equal in the eyes of God. All people are called to be in solidarity with everyone in the home, most especially, with those who are oppressed, voiceless, and marginalized. Only then can true humanity be appreciated when all human persons mirror God, who is *the* very origin and source of all personal and communal relationships.

The Trinity as Persons-in-Relation

God as the Blessed Trinity is a mystery of persons in communion, as “Persons-in-Relation,”⁴⁸ where “the mystery of God [is] profoundly relational and communal.”⁴⁹ That is, “[t]he divine Trinity of persons in God are in relationship – for one another and for us. Through our salvific relationship with the Trinity, we too become persons in relationship for others.”⁵⁰ As a mystery of persons-in-relation, “[o]ne God in three persons: God is not solitude but communion, the ocean of his being vibrates with an infinite movement of love, reciprocity, exchange, encounter, family, and celebration.”⁵¹ In other words, it is this love that is the very core of the relationship of the three divine persons who are

⁴⁶See CFC, § 689.

⁴⁷Ibid., § 691.

⁴⁸David H. McLroy, “Towards a Relational and Trinitarian Theology of Atonement,” EQ 80.1 (2008):13.

⁴⁹Christina A. Astorga, *Catholic Moral Theology and Social Ethics: A New Method*, 209.

⁵⁰Charles E. Curran, *The Catholic Moral Tradition Today: A Synthesis* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1999), 92.

⁵¹Francesco Follo, “The Trinity is a Communion of Love and Light and Man is Its True Image,” (June 13, 2014), <https://zenit.org/articles/the-trinity-is-a-communion-of-love-and-light-and-man-is-its-true-image/> (accessed August 15, 2018).

united in love as “persons-in-relation.” As St. John posits, “God is love” (1 John 4:16) whose very being is love Himself.⁵² The Blessed Trinity then is a “communion of love.”

God has created everything out of His Own Will; particularly, human beings are created in His own image and likeness and are capable of loving God and others, to which this capacity to love overflows but which must not only be contained in God-Self relation but must also be shared with others. Hence, it is God’s ultimate goal to really share His divine life with us in eternity.⁵³ In revealing God-Self, He makes the first move and initiates the loving and personal relationship with different persons in the Bible,⁵⁴ starting with Noah, after the fall of Adam and Eve, through an everlasting agreement known as *Berit* or covenant.

Unfortunately, it is we human beings who oftentimes forget to keep the loving and personal relationship with God as He never wavers in His faithfulness in us. As the ultimate evidence of His faithfulness to humankind, God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus the Christ, to redeem and save the world. As John the Evangelist proclaims: “[f]or God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (John 3:16). Jesus then became the concrete manifestation of God’s being to others by showing them how to live an authentic human life. Consequently, He was “willing to face death as the final act of life fully lived for others; a love so boundless and invincible that it overcomes the power and finality of death.”⁵⁵ But before Christ left the world, He promised to send the *Paraclete* (Holy Spirit) as the Divine Helper of the disciples. It is the Holy Spirit of the Father and the Son who assisted the followers and believers of Jesus Christ in continuing their loving relationship with the Blessed Trinity and with others in the community, which later developed into the “Church.”

⁵²See CCC, § 221.

⁵³See DV, § 2.

⁵⁴See DV, § 3.

⁵⁵Christina A. Astorga, *Catholic Moral Theology and Social Ethics: A New Method*, 210.

Church: As Community of Relationships through Koinonia

The word church can be understood as an assembly or a convocation of people for a religious purpose known as *Qahal Yahweh* or “assembly of the Lord.”⁵⁶ This reminds us how the members of the Jewish household became a special part of the household of God through this special gathering or assembly. Also, “[b]y calling itself ‘Church,’ the first community of Christian believers recognized itself as heir to that assembly...”⁵⁷ for they belong to Him, as the Greek word *Kyriake* and German word *Kirche* for church mean: “what belongs to the Lord.”⁵⁸ Just like the concept of home, the church is an assembly where people truly belong and find security and comfort with other members of the community. It is a community of persons being in relationships. With Vatican II, the church is understood as the “people of God.” This is one of the major shifts in the perspective of the Church - from merely a building or a structure to the people or the community themselves. Acts 2:42 shares how the early Christian community “devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.”

This concept of “community” for the Jews can be best understood by examining the experience of *koinonia* which is frequently mentioned in the writings of St. Paul. It often refers to “the relationship of Christians to one another, grounded on their relationship to the divine persons.”⁵⁹ This only suggests that the Church as a community in a relationship, who lives in *koinonia*, must first be in reciprocity with God. Only then can this community share this experience of reciprocity with God to others. Subsequently, this reciprocity with others can be done by starting with one’s own family, the Christian home, then the Church (Christian community) as a whole.

⁵⁶See CCC, § 751.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹“Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of Koinonia, A Report of the International Consultation between the Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance (1993-2002),” §2, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/evangelicals-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc20111220_report-1993-2002_en.html (accessed August 20, 2018).

MORALITY FOR THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Since it has already been established that a home is about relationships, this article adopts Charles Curran's *relational-responsibility* model to highlight relationships as important component in dealing with daily morality of the home, and to show how the human person and his/her relationship to others (God, neighbor, world) can be the very norm of morality for the Christian home.⁶⁰

A Brief Critical Appropriation of Curran's Relational-Responsibility Morality Model

In a nutshell, Curran's *relationality-responsibility* model understands morality as "primarily comprised of relationship held together by on-going interaction with God, neighbor, world, and self instead of seeing each as standing alone and being subject to a pre-arranged system of laws or a plan in search of a goal."⁶¹ In other words, Curran views the human person as a free moral subject who can make a morally responsible decision when engaging him/herself "in multiple relationships with God, neighbor, world, and self."⁶²

The concept of morality then in this context has shifted its focus from the "act" done by the person to the moral subject doing the acts and the effect/s of these acts to the moral subject as well as to others. Thus, for Curran, the idea of relating to God and others is a very important ingredient in order to live an authentic Christian moral life. For, it is only by being relational as a free subject that one realizes how others can assist him/her in being and becoming a better person despite his/her sinfulness and weaknesses through mutual co-existent relationships. In the words of Vincent

⁶⁰Charles E. Curran, *The Catholic Moral Tradition Today, A Synthesis*, 73-81. Charles E. Curran is one of the leading theologians since Vatican II who seriously engages himself in the renewal of Catholic moral theology especially in the United States.

⁶¹Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith*, 304.

⁶²Curran, *The Catholic Moral Tradition Today*, 73.

MacNamara, “morality is to co-exist peacefully with others. It is a matter of interpersonal co-existence.”⁶³

Through the different relationships, the human person as a moral subject is “formed in and through historical relationships and [concrete] realities.”⁶⁴ In fact, Curran believes that the *relational-responsibility* model, compared to other ethical models, can “deal adequately with the concrete realities of each individual called in a unique way to respond to the gift of God and the needs of others in our complex world.”⁶⁵ However, Curran also reminds us that as one relates with others, s/he is challenged “to initiate action as well as respond to the actions of others.”⁶⁶ Moral reality then in this situation, is one of *invitation* and *response*.⁶⁷ This is evident in the way Jewish people view their moral lives as a response to God’s invitation to love and serve Him as well as to love and serve others. Thus, Curran echoes Bernard Haring’s view that “responsibility, not law or commandments, is the focal center of Catholic moral teaching.”⁶⁸

When it comes to making a moral decision, Curran understands that the human person sees to it that s/he considers all factors which may affect the different relationships that s/he has with others – God, fellow human beings, community and society in general. Being moral then is being faithful to the interrelatedness with others. In considering all the elements of morality, one does not reduce reality to consequences or to duties.⁶⁹ Yet Curran emphasizes that “goals and rules are not irrelevant to ethics, but they

⁶³See Vincent MacNamara, *The Truth in Love: Reflections on Christian Morality*, 2nd ed. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1989), 23–42.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 97. Janssens also emphasizes that human person adequately considered is a historical being characterized by historicity. See Loius Janssens, “Personalism in Moral Theology,” 151.

⁶⁵Charles E. Curran, *The Moral Theology of John Paul II* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 106.

⁶⁶Charles E. Curran, *The Catholic Moral Tradition Today: A Synthesis*, 93.

⁶⁷See Donal Harrington, *What is Morality?* (Dublin: The Columbia Press, 1996): 9–27.

⁶⁸Charles E. Curran, “Take and Receive: The Law of Christ,” Blog, *NCR Today*, February 1, 2016, https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/take-and-read-law-christ_ (accessed August 28, 2018).

⁶⁹See Charles E. Curran, *Catholic Moral Theology in Dialogue* (London: University of Notre Dame, 1976), 139.

must be subjected to a rational, historical–relational critique, which relativizes any claims of teleological and deontological approaches to absolutism or ultimate finality.”⁷⁰ Besides, the *relational-responsibility* model is particularly significant in the Christian home, for it has shifted its understanding about moral theology and moral life from the classicist to the historical consciousness worldview. The classicist sees the world as a finished product where morality is understood as “the permanent, the essential, the unchanging, and the substantial,”⁷¹ while the historically conscious worldview “recognizes that humanity is both a product and a maker of history.”⁷² It gives more importance on “the historical, the particular, the individual, the changing and the relational,” which fittingly characterizes the kind of life that modern man and woman live in their respective homes.⁷³

On the one hand, Richard Gula shares one of the strengths of the *relational-responsibility* model, i.e., it “respects the uniqueness of the person and the peculiarities of historical circumstances”⁷⁴ where “all human behavior must be judged in the context of actual relationships.”⁷⁵ On the other hand, he notes some of its weaknesses as well. According to him, “its lines of moral analysis are not always that clear,”⁷⁶ and moral decisions “come with some degree of uncertainty and tentativeness.”⁷⁷ These weaknesses are due to its character as being dynamic, developing, and changing as it possesses no fixed standard guidelines to morality. Curran acknowledges that the *relational-responsibility* model “obviously

⁷⁰Richard Shields, “Ethics and Ambiguity: A Critical Study of Charles E. Curran’s Ecumenical Ethics of Dialogue,” (unpublished doctoral dissertation, School of Graduate Studies, Mc Master University, July 2002), 52.

⁷¹Charles E. Curran, *A New Look at Christian Morality* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Fides Publishers, Inc., 1968), 169. See also Richard M. Gula, S.S., *Reason Informed by Faith*, 31.

⁷²*Ibid.*

⁷³Curran, *A New Look at Christian Morality*, 169. See also Charles Curran, *The Catholic Moral Tradition Today, A Synthesis*, 21.

⁷⁴Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith*, 32.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 304.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

[needs] much further development.”⁷⁸ While this model emphasizes the importance of relationships and responsibility in the human moral process, it does not thoroughly elaborate on the important role of human affectivity in one’s moral life.⁷⁹ Therefore, this paper posits that human affectivity, together with human intellect and will, must be considered in making moral decisions or judgments in daily life experiences.

Considering Human Affectivity in Making Moral Judgements

Since the home is about human relationships, human affectivity then is essentially part of home. In this context, the home is crucial in shaping morality. As Gula asserts: “. . .moral living begins in the hearts and not with an abstract principle about the nature of being human from which we draw crisp conclusions.”⁸⁰ He further claims that “[w]e live and reflect morally in the first place not because we have the reason but because we have an affective commitment to what we care about.”⁸¹ In fact in the biblical tradition, “the heart is the seat of vital decisions, for it is the center of feeling and reason, decision and action, intention and consciousness.”⁸²

The morality of the Christian home then should cater to both the intellect and affectivity of an individual member. While human intellect helps the person objectively justify the moral act to be morally right or wrong, human affectivity helps clarify and illumine the human reason to reach a better moral judgment. Moreover, members of the Christian home are not just free rational individuals; they are also relational and affective beings. Corollary

⁷⁸Charles E. Curran, *Catholic Moral Theology in Dialogue* (London: University of Notre Dame, 1976), 139.

⁷⁹Human affectivity in this context includes human affection or feeling, emotion, sensitivity or sensation, desires, and motivation. All these components deal with the human heart where they guide the human person in arriving at a sound moral judgment when making moral decision/s. However, these components were not thoroughly discussed in this section.

⁸⁰Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith*, 13.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 15.

⁸²See Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 40-55 as cited by Richard M. Gula, S.S., *Reason Informed by Faith*, 99.

to this reality, they are to seriously consider integrating the human intellect, will, and affectivity in the moral process. Yet, the human person can only pursue this integrative moral process if members of the Christian home undergo discernment.

Basically, discernment is the ability to distinguish a moral judgment or decision from the given choices in one's life using human reasoning. Following the teaching of St. Ignatius of Loyola, this discernment process goes "beyond logic and deductive methodologies in understanding the complexities of moral life."⁸³ It emphasizes the role of human affectivity in decision making where both reason and affectivity are equally considered, guided and illumined by faith to produce an integrative kind of judgment. The ability then for one person to reflect on his/her ordinary life events presupposes an important aspect of discernment which then corresponds to the moral experience of the Christian home.

The human person, being finite, is limited in reasoning, and his/her affectivity can be unstable and bias. But with the illumination of faith in doing discernment, one is confronted with God - the ultimate source of knowledge, wisdom, and affectivity. God engages in an intimate conversation with a human being and is at the very core of this spiritual discernment. Through this process, too, human desires are aligned with the divine desires where God purifies the human mind and the human heart from all forms of uncertainties, vagueness, prejudices, and selfish desires. As a consequence, the human person is guided but not forced to make choices. Instead, he/she decides using his/her conscience and freedom, resulting to a better and balanced moral judgment. After making an important, decision he/she will be in a state "where one finds a place of interior peace and wholeness".⁸⁴

⁸³"Discernment," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd edition, Vol. 4 (Washington, DC: The Gale Group Inc., 2003), 225.

⁸⁴See Christina A. Astorga, *Catholic Moral Theology & Social Ethics*, 488.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

The main purpose of this study is to respond to the Council Fathers' call for an alternative model in understanding Christian morality by utilizing the perspective of Christian home experiences. It also attempts to answer the important question: *What element or character of the home truly makes it home?* It resolves that most of the different understandings of home are somehow related to some kind of a bond, an attachment or special relationship to God, to a "place" be it physical or spatial, to space, to nature around us and to fellow human beings. From this collated definition of home, we then adopted and re-appropriated Charles Curran's *relationality-responsibility* model to show how the human person as a free moral subject, making a personal decision through multiple relationships with others (God, neighbor, community, world), can be the very norm of morality for the Christian home. The human person also plays an important role in turning into a home the places or spaces of security, identity, belongingness, and emotional attachment.

While it is noteworthy to consider that Curran gives importance to "relationships" in dealing with daily moral life, he does not explicitly support the role of human affectivity in making moral judgments. Thus, this paper recommends that for members of the Christian home to have an integrative approach to morality, they must consider the tensional but creative dynamism between the rational and affective aspect of the human person in doing moral judgment.

As human reasoning is limited and human affectivity unstable and bias, it needs the special participation of God through faith to help illumine the human mind and purify the human heart when making a moral judgment. This can only be done through the process called *discernment*, wherein the human person is united with God at the very core of his/her being who guides and enlightens him/her in making moral decisions by considering the consequences of his/her actions in relation to others—to the community, to the world, and, ultimately, to God.

Lastly, this paper suggests an alternative morality model that corresponds to the common experiences of the members of the Christian home in the present time. We hope that through this re-appropriated morality model many Christian Catholics will be more inspired to deepen the understanding of their Christian faith, which can lead them to active participation in the Christian communal and social life, both at home and in /out of the Church.

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