#### **MISSIONARY FAMILIES OF CHRIST INDIA NEWSLETTER**

(FORMERLY KNOWN AS COUPLES FOR CHRIST INDIA)



# THE WORD OF GOD A DOUBLE EDGED SWORD

FROM THE HEART OF THE SERVANT **How The Word Transforms Families** 

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**EVENT REPORT Engaged Couples Program 2021** 

NEWSFEED 8 Training & Evangelization

The LORD is my d shepherd; I shall not PSALM 23:1 He makes me lie down in green pastu The LORD Is My Shepherd APSALM OF DAVID. He leads me beside still waters!

He leads me in Paths of righteous Even though Ik walk through th

I will " feat no evil, your o rod and your staff, for" you are with me; they comfort me. You<sup>p</sup> prepare a table bef

in the presence of you' anoint my head my's cup overflor Surely goodness all the days o

and I shall dw u forever? The King of Glo

June 2021 | 12th Edition

For Private Circulation Only

### THE WORD-LIVING AND ACTIVE

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

We have much reason to immerse ourselves in the richness, beauty, and power of the Word in our daily lives. For this double edged sword to show us who are and clean out the dross, we need to be faithful in reading the Scriptures and pondering them. This need in our lives isn't effectively met by being satisfied merely with podcasts and daily verses. At various points these may cause us to change direction or dwell on something, but to remain in conversation with our Lord, it takes commitment to keep the conversation going. This is the listening and response of the heart that our Lord invites us to. In quietly but regularly speaking with our Lord, we are changed!

As part of our community life, we commit to read and ponder the Scriptures daily; and are to be held accountable in our households for doing so. We're also taught to be absorbed in, and to absorb the word in various ways. Every monthly teaching that is given is rich in scripture and the interpretation of the same in light of Catholic teaching to provide us with direction in our spiritual lives.

The conversion of St. Augustine was anchored in this one command by a little child, "Take up and read." His life suggests that after taking up reading the Word, he didn't allow his heart to rest until the double-edged sword was at work within him. We too, weave into our daily walk with God in our personal prayer, the habit of reading and meditating on the Scriptures. Through this ancient practice of Lectio Divina, of taking up and reading our Bibles, it has made our prayer lives come alive. We are enriched by reading and listening to the Word of God, who is Jesus himself

and who, through scripture, draws us closer to His heart.

As Catholics living the liturgical life, we have in some parts of our community started the 'Liturgical Bible Study' (LBS) where the readings of the following Sunday liturgy are studied and pondered upon in groups, and can be practiced by families as well. The thread that connects the Sunday readings which leads us to take action to live it out in the week. Participation in the LBS has led to a greater appreciation not just of Scripture but also of the liturgy of the Church.

When a community strives to live out the Word of God, it provides the fuel needed for us to be truly Missionary. It provides us with the Daily Bread we require to fulfill both spiritual and secular tasks and lights the path we trod on along with others to the very gates of Heaven.



**COUNTRY SERVANT - JIMMY XAVIER** 

#### FROM THE HEART OF THE SERVANT



### **HOW THE WORD TRANSFORMS FAMILIES**

The family is a special place. It is where one is loved, one is taught, one is formed, one grows in the life of Christ. A special role is given to parents, who are to stand in the place of Jesus as they care for the children that belong to God. In order for parents to carry out their role, they themselves must be growing in the life of Jesus. They need wisdom that comes from on high. Where do they get this wisdom? It can only be from God Himself, and God imparts His wisdom through His word, which is the Bible.

The Bible is a book about salvation history, from creation to the end of the age. It is jampacked with wisdom from on high. It tells us how God has acted through history, and how we are to act if we are to live according to His will and ways. It has everything we need to live a life pleasing to God, helping ensure that at the end of time we make it to eternal life.

The longest psalm in the book of Psalms is Psalm 119. It gives praise to God for giving us His laws, providing instruction for people to live by. In verse 9 it says, "How can the young keep his way without fault? Only by observing your words." And right there you have it. The word of God transforms us, enabling us to walk the straight and narrow path. This is the way to be blessed. As it says in verse 1, "Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk by the law of the Lord."

What are some fundamental realities that the word of God addresses?

\* We are all pilgrims, just passing through this valley of tears. We are not invested in this life. We need God to show

us the way. "I am a sojourner in the land; do not hide your commandments from me." (v.19).

- \* We face struggles and difficulties. We need hope in the midst of disappointments and trials. God's word is what can see us through. "My soul clings to the dust; give me life in accord with your word." (v.25). "My soul is depressed; lift me up according to your word." (v.28). "This is my comfort in affliction, your promise that gives me life." (v.50).
- \* We live in a dark and evil world, and the evil one seeks to bring us down, away from the love and protection of God. All the more we cling to Him and His promises. "Though the snares of the wicked surround me, your law I do not forget." (v.61).
- \* We ultimately look to the salvation of our God. We have our hope in Jesus the Savior. The Bible is a book of hope. "My soul longs for your salvation; I put my hope in your word." (v.81).

And so we look to God's word for the transformation in Christ of ourselves and of our families. We read the Bible every day. We study it. We meditate on God's word. We base our lives on it. "How I love your law, Lord! I study it all day long." (v.97). When we do so, we are assured that we will live in the light of Christ and walk in the pathway of righteousness. "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path." (v.105).

What a great gift God has given us, in leaving us with His written word.

**SERVANT GENERAL - FRANK PADILLA** 



The Bible is the Word of life to be sown, a gift that the Risen Jesus asks us to accept in order to have life in his name.

POPE FRANCIS

### **LIVE THE WORD**

The Word of God is like a double-edged sword is what scripture tells us. It is therefore important for every Catholic to be immersed in the Word, study it and implement it in one's daily life.

Liturgical Bible Study or LBS was started in 2001 by Fr. Arlo Yap, a Divine Word Missionary, notably with a group of street children in the Philippines. The need for LBS emerged from the quest by the SVD Biblical Center, Manila to address the emerging need for Catholics to be nourished by the Word of God even though the Philippines was awash with Bible sharing groups.

The aim was to partake in the advantages of methodologies of such detailed studying such as developing an appetite for the Bible, deepened relationships in groups and communities, providing powerful insights on the Word, rich & indepth sharing, and complementing formation programs in the diocese, parishes, schools and so on. The process of LBS involves the group first gathering with an opening prayer and song. The Gospel of the following Sunday is then picked and read verse by verse and reflected upon by the group, this is followed by a similar reading of the First Reading, linking it back to the Gospel. The Second Reading is then reflected on and along with the Psalm, the group looks to identify the overarching theme - the 'one-thread message" guided by the leader. This is followed by a sharing from the group members on the application of the Word of God and the challenge to live it out in their lives. The session is closed with a prayer and song.

The LBS methodology was adopted by Missionary Families of Christ (then known as Couples for Christ Foundation for Family and Life) for its own use in 2008 and later to be a part of its outreach to parishes as part of the Live Christ Share Christ (LCSC) Movement. Since 2012 the LBS has been started in many parishes around the world including India. In the Philippines it has been active not just in parishes but also in small Christian communities, schools, catechetical centers and even in corporate houses. The process being simple even children can conduct an LBS session and benefit much from it.



LBS was first started in India in Goa in 2012. Later in 2014 a brother came down from Manila and had training programs all over India teaching the process to both the laity and the clergy. The methodology has been quietly practiced since then.

With lockdowns since the pandemic, the methodology has been adapted to online use and has been extensively practiced by online groups with participants sometimes from different countries. The online experiment has provided a new avenue for the spreading of God's Word using technology.

MFC is now ready to set up online LBS groups of diverse compositions including Hindi. We are on the verge of an explosion of God's Word!

**Christopher Colaco MFC Couples Mumbai** 

#### **TESTIMONIAL REPORT**

The Liturgical Bible Study has touched and enriched the lives of many across age groups, cities and countries. The Liturgical Bible Study has borne fruit and has led to a greater appreciation of the liturgy of the Church and underlying connection of the readings. Here are a few testimonies of those who have benifitted from this group.

I began participating in the LBS adults group in September 2020. After I had an enriching experience, and was encouraged by my spiritual mentor, it felt right to extend LBS with some youth from my parish. I find the LBS methodology to be simple and structured. It helps me be more present during the



Sunday Mass as by then I'm well aware of the readings, why they've been chosen for that particular day, and also the key message. In the last 5 months of organising LBS, I've noticed that we're able to use our learnings from the readings and make it into a meaningful prayer. Despite our changing schedules as students and working individuals, we look forward to participating in LBS every weekend.

#### Reneta, Mumbai



The LBS has made Mass a more richer and meaningful experience. It has helped me understand how valuable the Bible is, in all situations that I go through. It has also helped me to form and nurture new friendships and help each other grow in our walk with God. The

best part about LBS is it's simple format, anyone can conduct it easily, and it gives you some value to hold on to each week.

#### Encita, Mumbai

LBS has helped me better understand the Word of God; especially the Old Testament. It has helped me ponder and has made a better impression when I



apply it in my daily life. It has kept me grounded especially during difficult times like we are going through right now and it's been a source of strength and comfort as I experience it every week.

#### Sandra, Mumbai

"Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" Lk. 24:32



The LBS is a "Road to Emmaus" experience every Thursday, where we learn something new come alive. The sunday Mass

and the Liturgy of the Word come alive and we see the readings take on a whole new meaning. It has been an enriching and a wonderful experience that keeps me strong and helps me grow in my spiritual journey with the Lord.

#### Ferdie, Canada



At LBS we study every verse of the Sunday Mass readings thoroughly and this has helped me better understand the Word of God and we are well equipped. My approach towards reading the Bible has changed and I am able to apply the Word of God in my daily life. Holy Mass has now become

meaningful and I look forward to attend Sunday Mass with great enthusiasm as we go prepared.

Tracy, Dubai



The Holy Scriptures lead us to God and open the path to the knowledge of God.
St. John Chrysostum

### **ENGAGED COUPLES PROGRAM 2021**

The Missionary
Families of Christ,
India organized the
Engaged Couples
Program on the
27th and 28th of
March 2021 via a
virtual platform.



The theme of the program was "Because Marriages aren't made in Heaven". The purpose of this program was to prepare the engaged couples for the sacrament of Holy Matrimony. It taught the participants how to start and build a family based on Christ.

Session one introduced the participants to what a marriage is, how God sees marriage and how important it is in God's plan for creation. The speaker further went on to show that even the Bible begins with a marriage, the marriage of Adam and Eve; and ends with a marriage, the marriage of the Lamb with the Church. In this session, the participants also learnt what are the roles of a husband and a wife in a marriage and the importance of God's presence in marriage.

Session two touched upon the importance of communication in marriage. It taught the participants how man and woman tend to take different approaches in the way they communicate or expect to be communicated with, and also as a couple, how to understand each other and communicate effectively. It also emphasized on the importance of setting aside a dedicated time to speak out their hearts and also listen to each other.

Session three was based on the third question the priest asks before the marriage vows i.e. "Will you accept children lovingly from God, and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his church?" It went on to teach the participants the gift of children in a marriage and how to raise them according to the Catholic faith. The speakers shared their own experiences in raising their children, sharing various important tips in the process. It also spoke about the role and responsibilities of a father and a mother in the upbringing of their children.

The fourth and the final session spoke about what is Natural Family Planning (NFP), how it works and how it is different from the other worldly ways of family planning. It explained the participants how they can adopt this method in their own marriages. It also explained how NFP is accepted by the Catholic Church as the only legit way of planning a family without going against God's plans for humanity.

Throughout all the sessions, the speakers testified their own life experiences regarding marriage, which made it very easy for the participants to understand and grasp all the concepts. All the participants were given a questionnaire to answer which touched upon various important topics such as marriage expectations, sources of possible conflicts and genogram which gave the couples an opportunity to discuss their expectations/responses to those questions with their partners.

Both the days started with a time of Praise and Worship to help all participant prepare themselves for the sessions and also to call upon God's presence. The service team also conducted various fun activities to keep the couples "Engaged"

The program ended with a time of discussion where the panel answered questions which the participants had and also suggested a few good reads based on the sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

Arlene Mendes MFC SINGLES UK





Before attending the ECP we were told it was something we would not want to miss! The talks gave us an insight to a lot of areas that we would have to go through in our marriage, inlaws, finances, decisions, etc. The speakers were simply brilliant! They spoke from their heart and from

experience, that's what made it even more meaningful. They stressed that 'God had to be at the center of our marriage and that every decision, whether big or small has to be taken after praying to the Lord.' We give glory to God for all those who worked to put this program together for our benefit.

#### **Dylan and Claire - Porvorim**

The program was very in formative and interesting. It gave us a beautiful insight into the joys as well as the challenges of marriage, through the experiences shared by the team. The activities helped us have



better in-depth conversations with each other and we particularly liked the session on communication which explained areas of conflict and how can we effectively communicate with our spouses in order to have a fruitful marriage. It gave us a lot of perpective and insights which we would surely continue to apply in our lives.

#### Bradley and Lysanne - Margao



We found the Engaged Singles Program very helpful. It answered some of our questions. We also discussed certain areas through the questionnaire that we had earlier overlooked. Gerard and Audrey's session was really

good. They exhorted the roles of a husband and wife well. Also enjoyed the session on Christian

Family which empahsised on the openesss to have kids and the roles we need to play, the way the Lord had intended to. The games were enjoyable and helped us exhibit team spirit as a couple.

#### Vinoth and Nikita – Bangalore

The engaged couple program was a complete Pre-cana experience, and the discussions we had after were helpful. All the speakers were just like us, and it was good to hear other couples' views on specific topics.



And it helped us a lot in following some simple methods to lead a prayerful life. The first thing we did when we began to know each other was to be rooted in Christ. Our phone calls always end with prayer. We kept God the third person in our relationship. It helped to grow as a friend and be open to each other. We loved each other's imperfections. The program gave the most significant input that is to include God in your life. Honestly, the online Engaged couples program was an amazing resource, and we highly recommend it to any engaged couple.

#### Melvin and Divya-Bangalore



We attended the engaged singles program in September 2019. Now that we are married for over a year and look back, the program was really enriching for both of us and has helped us in our day to day walk as a married couple. We understood the true value of the teachings of

sexual ethics, procreation and the evil of contraception and how priceless they are, in a world which would never talk openly about it. Generally, in today's society and the social media, the culture of death surrounds marriage, family life and procreation. If we had to not attend this session, it is possible that we would have; like many others today, been caught up in the web of lies.

#### Sheldon and Shaina - Bangalore





#### Live Christ Share Christ

63 participants attended the Tamil outreach program conducted on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February at Our Lady of Vailankanni Church, Randham/Vellore.





#### **Christian Life Seminar**

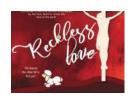
16 Couples, 15 youth, 5 Handmaids attended the program conducted on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February at Our Lady of Vailankanni Church, Randham/Vellore.





#### When I fall in Love

A session on relationships was given by Jason & Amanda (MFC Youth Formators of Bangalore) on February 14<sup>th</sup> was held at "Jeskel", Mangalore for the MFC Youth of Mangalore. Around 32 of them had attended the program held both virtually as well as in person.





#### **Reckless Love**

Around 40 participants attended the Christian Life Seminar conducted for all segments of the MFC Community starting 17<sup>th</sup> February onwards for the Calangute Chapter, Goa.





#### **Christian Life Seminar**

26 youth attended the program conducted on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February at Our Lady of Vailankanni Church, Randham/Vellore.

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## Prayer for Protection Against the Covid-19 Virus

"Merciful and compassionate Father, we come to you in our need to seek your protection against the COVID 19 virus that has disturbed and even claimed lives.

We ask you now to look upon us with love and by your healing hand, dispel the fear of sickness and death, restore our hope, and strengthen our faith.

We pray that you guide the people tasked to find cures for this disease and to stem its transmission.

We thank you for the vaccines developed made possible by your guiding hands.

Bless our efforts to use these vaccines to end the pandemic in our country.

We pray for our health workers that they may minister to the sick with competence and compassion.

Grant them health in mind and body, strength in their commitment, protection from the disease.

We pray for those afflicted. May they be restored to health. Protect those who care for them. Grant eternal rest to those who have died.

Give us the grace in these trying times to work for the good of all and to help those in need. May our concern and compassion for each other see us through this crisis and lead us to conversion and holiness.

Grant all these through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.





#### The Time has Come

An outreach program was held for the ICYM members of Mogarnad Warado on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February at Nithydhar Church, Salethur. A team of MFC Youth & MFC Singles served at the program held under the guidance of the spiritual director of MFC Mangalore, Fr. Anil D'souza.





#### **Parish Retreat**

70 people attended the retreat conducted at the Fatima Mata Catholic Church, Bishnah, Jammu from the 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> February.





#### **Christian Life Seminar-USA**

Five people attended the online program conducted on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February.





#### Live Christ Share Christ-Youth

75 participants attended the Tamil outreach program conducted on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March at St.Therese of Child Jesus, Karaikudi.





#### **Servant Leadership Program**

Program conducted for the MFC Youth - Upper Household Servants (Boys) was conducted by the MFC Singles from Mangalore & Bangalore at "Jeskel", Mangalore on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021.





#### **Lenten Retreat**

50 participants attended the Lenten retreat conducted on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March at Our Lady of Vailankanni Church, Randham/Vellore.





#### Redeemed

A Lenten retreat by the Redemptorists was conducted in association with Missionary Families of Christ. The music, games, inner healing session, Lenten Way of the cross was conducted by MFC youth Bangalore for the Redemptorist media centre from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> of March.





#### National Singles Servant Leaders Training

108 participants attended the online national level training for the Singles segment on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> March.





#### **Parish Retreat**

200 people attended the retreat conducted at the Nirmal Mata church, Akalpur, Jammu from the 20<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> March.





#### **Marriage Preparation Course**

A marriage preparation course conducted for 12 engaged couples from the 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> of March, at the Pastoral center, Jammu.

# PRAYER FOR ST.JOSEPH'S PROTECTION

Oh, St. Joseph, whose protection is so great, so prompt, so strong, before the throne of God, I place in you all my interests and desires.
Oh, St. Joseph, do assist me by your powerful intercession, and obtain for me from your Divine Son all spiritual blessings, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
So that, having engaged here below your heavenly power, I may offer my thanksgiving and homage to the most loving of fathers.

Oh, St. Joseph, I never weary contemplating you and Jesus asleep in your arms;
I dare not approach while he reposes near your heart.
Press him in my name and kiss his fine head for me and ask him to return the kiss when I draw my dying breath.

St. Joseph, patron of departing souls pray for me. Amen.

### CONSECRATION TO OUR LADY OF VICTORY



O Blessed Virgin Mary, you with your Son Jesus crushed the head of the serpent.

In the spiritual war that continues to rage in the heavens and on earth, you have already won the victory.

Your holy warriors stand before you, dear Mother Mary.
We consecrate ourselves to the cause of your Son Jesus, the Redeemer of the world, and to you as his Co-Redemptrix.
We dedicate ourselves to the task of winning souls for the Kingdom.
We commit to do battle against all evil forces.

Cover us with your mantle of protection as you send us forth under your banner. Amen.

Mary, Star of the New Evangelization, pray for us.

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- www.instagram.com/mfcsinglesindia www.instagram.com/mfcyouthindia
- http://www.youtube.com/c/MFCIndia www.mfc.org.in





#### **Parish Retreat**

One day retreat was conducted for parishioners at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Machiwara Ludhiana, Jalandhar diocese on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March.





#### **Parish Retreat**

One day retreat was conducted for 75 parishioners at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Shanehwal Ludhiana, Jalandhar diocese on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March.





#### **Kairos**

A First Holy Communion Retreat named Kairos was conducted by MFC Youth for the children of St. Anthony's Church, TC Palya, Bangalore on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April.





#### **Unlock**

A summer camp was conducted for the youth attended by 13 participants on the 10<sup>th</sup> 11<sup>th</sup>,17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of April at Don Bosco High School, Panjim.





#### You Are Loved

MFC Mangalore conducted an online Christian Life Seminar for 18 participants from the 6<sup>th</sup> of May.





#### Marriage Enrichment Retreat, Australia

The program was conducted for 3 couples in Sydney, Australia on the  $9^{th}$  and  $10^{th}$  of May.



