

## Week 4- Protecting family as basic social unit

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### Opening hymn (Lenten hymn)

#### Opening prayer

Merciful Father, send forth your Spirit upon us the people of Southern Africa. May we hear anew the voice of Jesus Christ, inviting us to walk with him across the turbulent waters of our time: "Courage, it is I. Do not be afraid."

By the grace of the Holy Spirit empower us to bring comfort to the restless, hope to those who despair, healing to victims of violence and reconciliation where there is division.

May the Holy Spirit heal our families and communities. Grant us ethical and courageous leaders who put the good of the people before their own interest.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to speak the truth with courage, to act justly in all we do, to share with those in need, and always and everywhere to respect your gift of life as we strive to proclaim the values of the Kingdom in solidarity with all people of good will. Amen.

#### Brief Introduction

There are many ways in which the political and economic crisis in the three countries negatively impacts the stability of family as a basic social unit.

#### Sharing our personal experiences

Some of the challenges that families face in the current economic and social crisis include: migration to cities to look for jobs, the rising cost of living with families struggling to make ends meet, families descending deeper into debts, stress and mental health problems, rising problem of abuse (emotional abuse, financial abuse, physical abuse), rising problem of absent fathers, lack of protection for the unborn.

Take one or two of these challenges and share your personal experiences. What is your personal experience of the absent fathers (children growing up without the presence and support of their fathers)?

What are you personally doing to address this social problem?

### **Being challenged by the Gospel and the Catholic Social Teaching**

Take one or two of these quotes and share how they challenge you as a citizen and as a Christian.

In this time of economic difficulties, “families will always have their trials...but be living examples of love, forgiveness and care.” (Pope Francis, Meeting with families - Address of His Holiness Pope Francis, Mall of Asia Arena, Manila- 16 January 2015).

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, which helps couples to reflect on the ways in which love should show itself in midst of financial crisis as a family.

In this time of economic difficulties, “protect your families. See in them your country’s greatest treasure and nourish them always by prayer and the grace of the sacraments” (Pope Francis, Meeting with families - Address of His Holiness Pope Francis, Mall of Asia Arena, Manila, 16 January 2015). We often talk of bringing back prayer into schools? Should we also be talking of bringing back prayer into families?

“Become sanctuaries of respect for life, proclaiming the sacredness of every human life from conception to natural death.” (Pope Francis, Meeting with families - Address of His Holiness Pope Francis, Mall of Asia Arena, Manila- 16 January 2015). What are we doing to protect the unborn in our families and communities?

### **Action**

As an act of repentance, what can I (we) do this week in line with the above sharing?

### **Spontaneous prayers**

Allow time for those who wish to make a petition in prayer on behalf of the group. Our Father ... Hail Mary ...

**Closing prayer (Use the one on page 5)**