

Choosing life

By Chris Codden
For *The Visitor*

Here we are at the end of the catechesis for the World Meeting of Families. As the “Our Mission of Love” document says, the mission for all of us is to serve Christ in our families, church and communities. This “will require courage and fortitude. Jesus is calling, and we can respond, choosing lives of faith, hope, charity, joy, service and mission.”

This mission to serve our communities as Christians has become increasingly more difficult over the past few decades. The United States, particularly, has shifted away from being a Christian culture, drifting away from its foundation based on Judeo-Christian beliefs and values. Christians, who live out the teachings of their church and are guided by their faith, have now become a minority.

In other parts of the world, Christians have never been the majority and, therefore, understand the struggles that being a Christian can bear — such as being taken as irrelevant, looked at as intolerant or unenlightened. But for us, this is a fairly new phenomenon.

In this new reality, it is necessary for us to boldly proclaim our faith. We believe there is right and wrong, a set of moral truths that comes from God alone. So, our presence and voice in society, media, politics and institutions will help the world to become a better place.

When we face certain situations that are challenging because of a secular world view, it takes courage and fortitude to stand up for life and our faith. “Do not live entirely isolated, having retreated into yourselves as if you were already justified, but gather instead to seek the common good together” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1905).

Even more critical is fostering the Gospel in our homes: teaching our children the truth that only comes from Christ and his church, instilling in them their inherent dignity and responsibility as disciples, inspiring in them the truth that the family is founded on a communion of love — marriage, where two persons become as one flesh, indissoluble, and are the backbone of society.

Through marriage, a husband and wife are united for all of life and through the gift of themselves are generously open to the precious gifts that God entrusts to them: children. Our children, as gifts, are unrepeatable, unique and the “crowning glory” of a Christian marriage (CCC no. 1652). Our home becomes a place where children learn by loving example how to love and disagree, how to compromise and forgive, how to serve each other and the community.

By this witness to our children, we can offer the world a society of love, peace and mercy. For it is through our daily decisions regarding the importance of life and love that the woundedness that engulfs so much of the world today can find healing and grace.

In 1981, St John Paul II wrote his apostolic exhortation on the synod on the family, titled “Familiaris Consortio.” He said, “We must therefore go deeper into the unique riches of the family’s mission and probe its contents, which are both manifold and unified” (no. 17). Thirty-four years later, as we prepare for a new synod on the family, may we too search for a deeper understanding of serving the family.

Chris Codden is director of the Office of Marriage and Family of the Diocese of St. Cloud. Reach her at ccodden@gw.stcdio.org.

