

E-VAAC Concept Note: Befriending the Family Initiative (BFI)

Content

- Background
- BFI Concept, Objective, Approach and Methodology
- BFI Parish Focus
- BFI School Focus

Background

The 'Befriending the Family Initiative' (BFI) was conceived based on 3 inputs.

1. The 2015 Family Synod Survey conducted by the Catholic Church brought out several challenges that families were facing today. The key observations were:
 - Growing **individualism** deforms family bonds
 - The growing **consumerism** is separating sexuality from procreation
 - External Events - impact **emotional and spiritual** caliber of family life
 - The economic system leads to **social exclusion**: "outsiders" / "invisible"
 - Pastoral Care – Knowledge of **family psychology** needed for faith transmission
 - Digital and communication technology is reducing **emotive maturation**
 - **Family acceptance** of elderly, widowed, disabled etc. is on the decline
2. Cardinal Oswald (President CCBI) during his address to participants in December 2015, at the JDV (**Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth** is a Pontifical institute for philosophy and religion at Pune, India) jubilee plenary session exhorted the community to 'Befriend the other' along the following lines:
 - Befriend the poor
 - Befriend those in other faiths
 - Befriend those in irregular situations in the church (Marriages, etc.)
 - Befriend the migrants
3. Bishop Lawrence Pius (Director CCBI Family Commission - India) highlighted the need for Befriending the Family at the Annual meeting of Diocese Family Commission Directors in Goa on 28 Jan 2016. Also Archbishop Thomas of Kolkata diocese has supported a plan for Befriending the Family in Kolkata Diocese at the Annual Diocesan Priests meet in Kolkata in Jan 2016

The above points motivated a thought process for developing an initiative focused on Parenting under BFI

BFI Concept, Objective, Approach and Methodology

The Concept

The concept is to develop an approach to enhance parenting of our children in order to build stronger and better families to form the base of a more Vibrant, alert and aware church.

The Objective

The program will build stronger families and help each member to reach their full potential and at the same time build closer bonds with each other

The Approach and Methodology

The program will have a dual focus:

1. Programs to enhance parenting in the Catholic community at the parish level
2. Programs to enhance parenting at the school level. This will include people of other faiths too.

BFI – Parish Focus

At the parish the focus is to:

- Create awareness in the community of the need for better parenting
 - To identify specific topics requiring prioritized attention
 - Identify volunteer facilitators that can be trained to conduct the modules
 - Develop small self-help sharing groups to follow through learnings.
 - Provide inputs and monitor progress
- **Proposed Activity Plan**
 1. Introduction Session to create awareness and identify topics of interest
 2. To identify facilitator volunteers
 3. Conduct topic specific sessions periodically
 4. To help form small self-help groups at the parish level and provide them support
 5. Handover initiative to parish volunteers when ready and comfortable
 - **Support Background Activities**
 1. Identify lists of trained psychologists willing to provide counselling for parents and family members and pass them on to parishes to use for referrals.
 2. Identify trainers to develop Catholics willing to volunteer for the family ministry
 - **Proposed Alliances**
 1. Diocese Level alliance through the bishop
 2. Parish level through specific ministries
 3. NGO's that are willing to support the program and also align with the concept

General Information

In the month of February 2016 over 350 of the faithful including teachers and parents have been introduced to the subject. The participation has been good and 3 topics identified are:

1. Family time – enhancement and effectiveness
2. Age Appropriate upbringing
3. Communicating with children of different age groups

BFI – School Focus

At the school the overall objective is to:

- Assist families with children that have learning differences to achieve better results
- Create an awareness among children and parents on how to build stronger families

The approach would be different for each of the objectives

Families with children that have learning differences

There are 3 types of Children that could use support

1. Children with learning Challenges (Those who need medical help and professional support.)
2. Slow learners who mostly need help to cope with the pace of learning. They need to be understood and handled differently
3. Reluctant learners who are mostly intelligent but oppose the school system of imparting knowledge.

BFI plans to focus on slow learners and reluctant learners

- For this category the approach would be to screen children at lower classes and identify those with learning differences. (Class 4 and below)
 - Build in-house screening capabilities for schools to reduce costs for poor children
 - Inform parents and teachers on better ways of facilitating the studying of such children
 - Provide inputs for teachers and parents to meet parenting and teaching challenges
 - Build parent-teacher partnership groups in schools to facilitate self-help groups in finding solutions to their own challenges
 - Provide support for self-help groups to operate on their own for future sessions
 - Handover initiative to parish volunteers when they are ready and comfortable
- **Support Background Activities**
 - Identify lists of trained psychologists willing to provide counselling for parents and pass them on to schools to use for referrals.
 - Identify trainers to develop teachers willing to volunteer for partaking in BFI
 - Build a school counsellors forum for catholic schools through 'Diocese Board'
 - **Proposed Alliances**
 - Diocese Level alliance through the bishop – Diocese Educational Board
 - NGO's that are willing to support the program and also align with the concept

Awareness among children and parents

- Awareness: This approach would be to have team competitions (Moral Values Appreciation and Understanding) among students of higher classes on parent-child relationship current practices and how to remove impediments if any.
- Self-Help: Build parent-teacher partnership groups in schools to facilitate self-help groups in finding ways and means of helping their children in attaining their full potential
- Support: Support for self-help groups to operate on their own for future sessions.
- Handover initiative to volunteers when ready and comfortable

Alan

E-VAAC Facilitator (June 12, 2016)