

# Towards a Holistic Morality of the Christian Home

Joseph Climaco

## 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.”<sup>1</sup> 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.”<sup>2</sup> 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.

## 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.”<sup>3</sup>

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.”<sup>4</sup> Even the two

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<sup>1</sup> Pope 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.

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

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

<sup>4</sup>Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith*, 46.

moral approaches of the Church, namely *deontological* and *teleological*,<sup>5</sup> 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.

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<sup>5</sup> Deontological 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.