



Ten years after *Amoris laetitia*: *proclaiming the Gospel with families today*

Meeting of the Holy Father Leo XIV
with the Heads of Eastern Churches
and the Presidents of Episcopal Conferences

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Families today: reality, beauty and challenges

*Discerning the signs of the times through the experience of families
and the Church's pastoral commitment today*

Thursday, 8th October 2026

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Your Holiness, Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, dear brothers and sisters,

I have been requested to share with you **the lived realities, the beauty and the challenges of families** in Asia, particularly in India.

My presentation draws mainly on my own experience as a Pastor of my Local Church, which, amid the diversity of the ecclesial landscape in our vast continent, still shares many realities and challenges with other local Churches in India and across Asia.

In our local Churches, we recognise the family as a privileged *locus* of revelation: it is there that life is received, relationships are formed, Gospel values are transmitted, and faith is lived through unique and personal histories.

When we make listening a pastoral attitude, we discover that the realities, beauty, and challenges of our families converge to reveal the presence and action of God in a most mysterious way.

The Lived Realities of our Families: In India and, more broadly, across Asia, the family remains the bedrock of society and the foundational cell of the domestic Church. Yet the families we accompany also reveal to us that family life is undergoing profound and radical transitions. Three major shifts emerge as particularly significant.

First, the shift in the identity, nature and composition of the family: In India, and more broadly across Asia: (i) traditional joint and extended families are increasingly giving way to smaller, nuclear households; (ii) new forms of partnership and cohabitation are emerging, amid changing understandings of gender and relationships in urban settings; and (iii) the growing reality of interfaith marriages in our multi-religious societies raises new questions about the practice and transmission of faith within the family.

Second, the shift from rootedness to mobility: Rapid urbanisation, economic growth, new development models, and greater access to education are prompting more people to move, both within their countries and across borders, in search of better opportunities. As a result, many families entrusted to our pastoral care are no longer households connected to a single parish.

Third, the shift in the existential conditions of families: India and Asia share a common paradox: growth is rapid, but unequal; opportunities are expanding, but access to them remains discriminatory. The dignity of life, the value of labour and the protection of rights are not experienced equally by all.

Economic insecurity, poverty, unemployment and uncertainty about the future weigh heavily on many families. Christian families in many parts of India and Asia must also live amid growing religious polarisation and hostility, making the public expression and transmission of faith increasingly difficult.

On the other hand, we have **The Beauty of our Families**: The shifts in identity, mobility, and existential conditions mentioned above also uncover the beauty of grace at work in the ordinary.

What kind of beauty do our families offer to the Universal Church?

- a) **The beauty of relationship.** This is particularly seen in the care offered to children, the elderly, the infirm and the vulnerable. In such tender acts, our families lend visibility to God's love shining through self-sacrifice, sustained by patience and sealed with fidelity.
- b) **The beauty of resilience and hope.** Even amid poverty, migration and uncertainty, our families continue to create positive spaces for joy and hope.
- c) **The beauty of dialogue.** Amid Asia's immense religious and cultural diversity, families constantly encounter new avenues, new horizons, and new experiences of dialogue.

What our local Churches have done: When *Amoris Laetitia* reached us, the Churches in India and across Asia listened first to families. That listening shaped how we walk with them. We now see marriage preparation as the start of a lifelong journey, offer spiritual renewal and counselling to couples and children, and keep forming families and lay leaders over time.

What we have learned: Pastoral work is itself a place of discernment. We don't arrive with ready-made answers. We discern together with families and, in doing so, we learn how the Church herself is being asked to change.

First, we must be counter-cultural without losing touch. The Church is called to offer an alternative to whatever dehumanises, excludes or fragments. She needs to creatively respond to the call of *Magnificat Humanitas* to discern between the dehumanising "Babel syndrome" and the collaborative "way of Nehemiah" (MH 10); between homogenisation and communion (MH 7); and between exclusion and participation (MH 85).

Second, we must move from mission to families to mission among families. We can't guide people by standing far off and pointing at the destination. We need to be a lighthouse and a streetlight: one shows the horizon, the other lights the next step and walks alongside. Families are not just receivers of care. They are the Church's partners in mission.

Third, fragility is not the absence of grace. If we listen well, we hear wisdom and faithfulness alongside pain. So, we ask not what families are missing, but what God is already doing in their midst.

Let me share a concrete experience of a priest that changed his understanding of family ministry.

He once visited a young couple with two children, parishioners he knew from Sunday Mass. He expected an ordinary visit. But as they talked, the wife opened up. Her husband worked long hours and came home tired, while she was stretched between the children and the household. They rarely sat down to talk, and small misunderstandings were quietly creating distance. The children were glued to their phones, and the parents had little energy left to spend with them.

The priest offered no ready solutions. He listened, and encouraged them to speak openly and to listen to each other. They realized they had to do something to change their way of being family. At first, they chose a few small steps: a phone-free family evening each week, one shared meal each day, and a few minutes of prayer with the children.

Weeks later, he saw a small but real change. Their struggles remained, but they were facing them together.

He began to wonder how many other families were struggling silently in similar circumstances. The parish Family Commission was formed, which prioritised family visits and invited mature couples to accompany younger families.

In this way, the priest's real family ministry began, not with a programme, but with a visit, a conversation and a willingness to listen.

Conclusion

Ten years after the promulgation of *Amoris Laetitia*, the experience of the Synod continues to challenge us: there is no single stereotype of an ideal family, but rather a challenging mosaic of diverse realities, marked by joys, hopes, struggles and wounds. The family is not only a place to which the Church brings the Gospel. It is also a place from which the Gospel comes alive – from one generation to another, from one family to another, and from families to society. In this context, perhaps the question we might carry into our synodal discernment is this: What is the Holy Spirit asking the Church to change – not only in what we do for the families, but in how we understand, accompany and empower them as protagonists of the Gospel and as enduring *loci* of God's revelation. Thank you.

Resources

1. Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI), *Journeying Towards a Synodal Church: Mission 2033: National Pastoral Plan*, launched 11 September 2024.
2. Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI), *XXXVI Pilgrims of Hope: Discerning the Synodal Path, for we walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor 5:7)* (Bhubaneswar Document), Plenary Assembly Final Document, March 2025
3. Shaji George Kochuthara, CMI, "Reception of *Amoris Laetitia* in India," *Marriage, Families & Spirituality* 28 (2022): 102–118, especially 102, 116–117.
4. Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Love in the Family* (19 March 2016), no. 57.
5. Pope Leo, *Magnifica Humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence*. (15 May 2026), nos. 10, 7 & 85.
6. Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), *FABC Papers 151: The Catholic Family in Asia: Domestic Church of the Poor on a Mission of Mercy*, XI FABC Plenary Assembly, Colombo, Sri Lanka, FABC Central Secretariat, March 2017.
7. "Evangelized Evangelizers: The Asian Family through the Eyes of the FABC in its Documents from 1970–2013," *Asian Horizons* 9, no. 4 (2015): 785–788.
8. Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), *XII FABC Plenary Assembly: "You Will See Greater Things..." (Jn 1:50): The Call to Synodal Conversion and the Mission to be Bridges and Bridge-builders in Asia*, Jakarta, Indonesia, 20–26 July 2026.