

Religious Education in Families: A Challenge in Quest for Global Ethics

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Introduction

The quest for ethical life around the globe in this historical era is very critical and families have a profound role to play in the education of individuals in their lives. Religious education in families is an essential need but a huge challenge due to global fundamental social, economic, political and cultural changes. With so many happening, terrorism, abuse of drugs, lack of respect for human dignity and atrocities in war zones to mention a few, it is absolutely important to reflect on the type of citizens that are coming out of families, schools, and colleges of this century. Observation shows that there is a challenge of trying to instill ethics without religion, with no morals. From the ancient societies instilling morals in children was part of religious instruction, teaching morality, particularly instructions to children on honesty, self-respect, responsibility, resilience, respect for life, tolerance, trust, patience, kindness, gratitude, humility, generosity, integrity, forgiveness, confidence, compassion and many others. As a source of ethical formation and transformation of individual's religious education in families today face huge challenges. Lack or negligence of religious education in families manifests in some people's lives as they grow with no basic ethical skills which they need to be people with integrity.

Families are considered to be the cradle of humankind, natural place where one is nurtured and matures in society with an ethical manner. It is in families where people learn discernment, making reasonable choices and taking a course of action, acquiring knowledge of sacredness on appreciation of humanity and community life.

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In the families people learn self-giving, art of love, orderliness and ethical reasoning. Families help to instill ethical roots in the hearts of individuals, assisting them to attain social knowledge and all kinds of virtues. It is in families that good ethical foundation of an individual takes place; developing right character with internalized social values needed in building a cohesive society that respects and fosters personal dignity and societal ethical values.² This paper discusses how religious education leads to ethical reasoning and shaping of individual character. Shaped by ethical values a person is able to do self evaluation such as asking oneself “what kind of a person should I be or become in life? The text argues that through religious education in the families is critical for the character formation. This encompasses six major dimensions physical, mental, spiritual, social, emotional, and moral. For the development of moral character religious education in families is vital. Further, the paper discusses that virtuous people are made not born, and that social institutions like families, houses of worship, and schools can all teach character through education about virtues and by providing role models to imitate³. Finally the paper demonstrates that internalization of ethical values through religious education is crucial, then highlights some challenges that families face in executing this noble duty. The paper ends up with recommendations and conclusion.

Religious Education and promotion of Ethical Reasoning in Families

Religious education is the most critical way of training children in families to reason ethically. Education means to bring up or to rear and to lead; it is done for the purpose of perfecting human nature both formal and informal. It helps the self-transformation of an individual to become effective builder of the society⁴. For many years civilizations ranging from the Chinese, Egyptians, and Greeks to mention a few have used education as a means to make learners both smart and good⁵. Such cultures emphasized on moral or ethical education, focusing on training the will. For Christian ethical education entails making genuine commitment to Christ, helping one to be transformed into Christ’s image. In this case, the individual’s way of reasoning is brightened hence knowing what is right and doing it.

² Peter Mbaro, “The Christian Family and Education for Peace” in the Christian Social encounter, Issue No. 1 Jan-June 2011. Journal of the Centre for Social Justice and Ethics. CUEA pg. 23-24.

³ Geoffrey, pp. 41.

⁴ Vincent Kundukulam, “Education at the service of Evangelization” in India Theological studies Vol. XLIV, June 2007, no. 2. Pp 197-218

⁵ Hill, Alexander 1997, Beyond Ethics: Education in Christian Business Schools. Christian business Faculty Association 1997 Conference Program and Proceedings

Ethical way of life is about discipline, not abstract head knowledge, it is morality wired into individuals through habit and practice. It is one's ethical reasoning that corresponds with character development throughout an entire life⁶. Character can be understood as "the right mindedness and reformation of the will that causes one to recognize and then do the correct thing. The hard part of morality is not knowing what is right but doing it"⁷

Through caring and religious education of a child the family creates a home where tenderness, forgiveness, and respect to mention a few are practiced. A home is well suited for education in virtues. This concurs with Mbaro's observation that "The role of the family in life of an individual person is indispensable such that we cannot talk of an individual's integral growth in all dimensions without a family"⁸ People of wisdom and scholars have decisively suggested the teaching of religion in families as one of the critical ways of cultivating and enhancing moral values in the life of individuals and society. In relation to that Hans Kung and Kuschel Karl state "We affirm that a common set of core values is found in the teachings of religions, and that these form the basis of a global ethic...we affirm that this truth is already known, but yet to be lived in heart and action...We affirm that there is an irrevocable, unconditional norm for all areas of life, for families and communities, for races, nations and religions. There already exist ancient guidelines for human behavior which are found in the teachings of religions for sustainable world order"⁹

Unequivocally, Christian virtue ethics focuses on God's character which is consistently ethical. Thus the behaviour inconsistent with God's character is unethical¹⁰. There are three divine virtues that direct bearing on ethical decision making emphasized in the bible, firstly God is holy, and consequently as people created in God's image and likeness we are called to be ethically pure and devoted to him (Exod. 31:13).

⁶ Geoffrey P. Lantos. "How Christian Character Education can Help Overcome the Failure of Secular Ethics Education" in the Journal of biblical Studies pp; 19-52

⁷Ombelets, 1992, pg. 53 or Geoffrey, pg. 21.

⁸ Peter Mbaro "The Christian Family and Education for Peace" in The Christian Social Encounter, Issue No. 1. Jan.-June 2011. Journal of Centre for social Justice and Ethics. CUEA. Pp. 22.

⁹ Hans Kung and Kuschel Karl, pg. 14.

¹⁰ Alexander Hill Just Business: Christian Ethics for the Market Place. Downers Grove. Illinois Intervarsity Press, Trevecca Nazarine University. Nashville, 1997B, pp. 1-15.

Secondly, God is just, thus we are to be fair and respect people's rights to be treated with dignity; and thirdly God loves, therefore the need to maintain and develop good relationships with him through treating others with empathy, mercy and self sacrifice¹¹. This can be considered as right reasoning which can transform the world full of hatred and injustices. However, it can be argued that the bible is not meant only to inform but also transform those who learn about it. In addition other ancient religions like Greeks and Romans taught that natural moral virtues are prudence, practical wisdom and ability to make right choices in the concrete situation¹².

It has been noted that the basic global ethical problems of humanity in our time arises from lack of proper religious, formative and transformative education in modern families. Secularism, materialism, relativism, negative approach to technological developments and globalization to mention a few have immense impact on modern families. All these lack emphasis on spiritual life hence, the need for the quest of ethical values. Families are the roots for ethical values starting from the very first years of life where one is formed to be a person with dignity, and is later able to respect the dignity of others in all dimensions of life. An ethic is primarily concerned with the inner realm of a person, being self-critical, which entails constant self-examination as Socrates argues that unexamined life is not worth living¹³. An ethical life is about scrutinizing one's conscience and heart¹⁴ hence, trying to do what is right. "The heart offers an apt metaphor for describing what a person is"¹⁵ It is the heart that is connected to all the body organs continuously receiving and giving. So when this heart is not ethically nurtured, it leaves a vacuum which is filled with all sorts of things including bad ones as we read from Mt. 15:19 "For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, unchastity, theft, false witness, blasphemy".

¹¹ Geoffrey P. Lantos. "How Christian Character Education can Help Overcome the Failure of Secular Ethics Education" in the Journal of biblical Studies, pp. 44. pp; 19-52.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Burton F. Porter, *The Good life: Alternatives in Ethics*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc. , 1980, pg. 17.

¹⁴ Hans Kung and Karl J. Kuschel, *A Global Ethic: The Declaration of Parliament of world's Religions*. New York: Continuum, 1998.

¹⁵ Mary Elizabeth M. Moore, *Teaching from the Heart: A Theological and Educational Method*. Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International pg. 199

Bujo coincides with such view that “Every human act, long before being put into operation, must have taken roots in the human heart...the evil eye of a person harbouring thoughts of revenge towards a neighbour, will surely bring calamity...that evil has its roots in the very depths of the human heart”¹⁶.

So it is certain that individuals have all to gain by reasoning and embracing ethical life, but this is possible when families take religious education seriously. One would ask, to what extent are families of our time competent in shaping Ethical persons from the heart? Aristotle argues that “moral character comes from the heart as well as the head” that is being able to distinguish between right and wrong. Similarly, Plato believed that education makes people good and act nobly¹⁷. It is education of the heart that determines the right thing to do and the wrong thing not to do. In his observation concerning African ethical living Bujo¹⁸ states:

The ethical African does not argue with his or her head, but attributes everything, including speculative arguments, to that organ which is central in the human, namely to the heart. The Banyarwanda and the Bashi call it ‘man’s little king’. The ethical area the heart makes up the human being...Whoever has a ‘single heart’ is a human being who is sincere and reliable. On the other hand the person with ‘two hearts’ is double faced, dubious, and his intentions are not obvious. With the Bahema this expression signifies particularly that one is dealing with an evil person. The Batelela say of a person who is guilty: ‘he has a dirty heart’, showing that good and evil have their seats there... Since the heart embraces virtues and vices, we see the whole of human being that which makes his or her humanity, contained in this organ. It harbours knowledge and intelligence, will and memory; it is in short the seat of human perfection...

In this context, it is religious education in families that can nurture the heart leading to total formation and transformation of the person. In addition expressions like ‘my heart does not want me to go’, ‘my heart does not want me to say’ just to mention a few are to affirm that the heart is the foundation of African ethics¹⁹.

¹⁶ Benezet Bujo, *African Christian morality: At the Age of Inculturation*, Nairobi, Kenya: St Paul Publications Africa, 1990, pg. 58.

¹⁷ Geoffrey, pp. 30.

¹⁸ Bujo, pg. 100.

¹⁹ Bujo, pgs. 100-101

When religious education is well taught in families it is the heart that is touched, the person has an experience of continuous conversion as he/she grows. With religious education an individual does not only become intellectually convinced and emotionally attracted but also willing to submit his/her life to the divine teachings so as to constantly gain wisdom. This is in line with Porter's argument that things become right when they are approved by God, because morality derives from God who is responsible for the ethical standards of human person²⁰.

Christian religion teaches that when the heart is under Christ's and Holy Spirit's control, an individual is able to do what is right and avoid doing what is wrong. This entails knowing the purpose of existence, the fundamental reasons for living. However, in all these, there should be an intrinsic motivation from the family, true interiorization of the ethical code through religious education. Geoffrey²¹ argues that people with higher degree of intrinsic religiosity tend to be more moral, more conscientious and more disciplined, hence religious education is vital in families. Decisively morality taught is heart knowledge, which opens the way for right reasoning and character education helping the individual to know how best to live wisely. Unquestionably, as human beings we are all involved in search for the best way to live, that is how to preserve life and what is of higher value before God²².

The Importance of Teaching Ethical Values in Families.

It is important to bear in mind that character education can only fully succeed if it accompanied by religious education and spiritual revival. God's absolute moral principles are for people fully committed to Christ. In this context religion as well as education play a very key role in spreading ethical values throughout society. It is valuable to shape the character of an individual which is relevant for personal and societal transformation in the present life and the future generations. A good example is education on the respect for people with diverse cultures, religious traditions and political ideologies to avoid prejudice and violence; and instead promote mutual understanding. Religious wars in the present world is a serious problem, hence teaching in families on the respect of other people regardless of their religious beliefs is crucial.

²⁰ Porter, pg. 17.

²¹ Ibid, pp. 30, 31.

²² Porter, pg. 33.

Hans Kung and Kuschel contend that "... when they stir up prejudice, hatred, and enmity towards those different belief, or even incite or legitimate religious wars, they deserve the condemnation of humankind and the loss of their adherents"²³.

Christian families are asked to nurture the human person to be a good citizen in the society, and work for common good. The family is instrumental in molding and building the society. To ignore its role is to jeopardize the integral good of the human person. For instance laughter and fun in a family are a great help in laying the foundation of discipline; have good time together, ethical standards and standards of sex conduct are set by the family. Values in families are imperative for shaping the life of an individual hence, create good atmosphere for better life of all. "The Family is recognized as the most significant influence in determining the kind of person one becomes..."²⁴

Understanding and accepting persons from other religious, racial, social, economic and cultural background is central for establishing harmonious living in today's societies. All the stake holders in families and teachers are often quite unconscious of how their prejudices against children and adults of another race or religion affect the thinking and feeling of their children. These deny children chances of developing minds and hearts which will make their communities better and their own lives happier, hence quest for global ethics²⁵.

At times people act improperly because of ignorance although in the case of religious conflicts it could be accompanied by political interests. It is unfortunate that religion that quenches the spiritual thirst and is believed to drive human beings closer to creator is instead used to incite the faithful against people of other faith traditions who believe that all people are created in the image and likeness of God. The religions of the world have powerful influence on the human future. On the same line, currently there are about 40 wars in progress around the world, and the hostilities inspired by religions are major factors that lead to degradation of human dignity²⁶.

²³ Hans Kung and Kuschel Karl J. *A Global Ethic: The Declarations of the Parliament of World's Religions*. New York: Continuum. Pp. 31.

²⁴ Shuey, pg. 52

²⁵ Hans Kung, pg. 229.

²⁶ Hans Kung, *Yes to a Global Ethic*. New York. Continuum., pg. 100

Dalai Lama, one of the most respected spiritual leader in the world says “...every religion is called on to mobilize in itself ethical traditions and spiritual sources which will contribute to the well being of humanity as a whole. These are ethical traditions and spiritual sources which support what is started”²⁷

Unequivocally wrong and right are not just matters of personal references. Right refers to actions, conduct, and behavior that inquire into morality of such acts like keeping promise, truth telling and compassion just to mention a few. Nevertheless, the nature of modern day crime is a concern of many people of good will, people who try to live in a right manner. The high levels of violence witnessed in many communities of our time are a sign that true ethical shaping of the character in families is either missing or very minimal. So the need to quest for ethical values that can guide the modern person of the 21st century is critical.

People with internalized ethics, with transformative understanding of human value are few in our world today. The essence of ethical demand for human behavior, such as, do not kill, do not steal, do not lie, do not commit sexual immorality has meaning if religious education is taken seriously in families. Human beings have intrinsic dignity and unalienable rights, but also each has responsibility for what he /she does and does not do, hence, all our decisions, omissions and even failures have consequences. To be precise, ethical life is for healthier and happier life of an individual due to its objective values²⁸; so lack of such ethical values in families and society is a sign of sickness. That is why we have so many intellectual developed minds around the globe but the missing of ethical values is then clearly manifested in emotional, psychological, mental and spiritual confusions which lower human dignity. This is in line with what the famous educator in the Middle Ages, Ignatius of Loyola once said “the aim of life is not to gain a place in the sun, nor to achieve fame or success, but to lose ourselves in the glory of God”²⁹. Such understanding contradicts materialism and secularism which are now dominant in many people’s lives and families.

²⁷ Hans Kung, *Yes to a Global Ethic*. New York: Continuum. 1996 Pp. 105

²⁸ John Hymers, Introduction: Ethics and the Ground” in *Ethical Perspectives: Journal of the European Ethics Network* Vol. 14, No. 2, June 2007. Pp. 113-114

²⁹ Hill, Alexander, *Doing the right thing: A Framework for Making right choices at work*. Discipleship Journal.com Jan/Feb 2000, pp. 14, www.gospelcom.net/narsNP/DJdatabase/hill.Shtml Accessed 20/6/13.

However, it must be noted that “without the acknowledgement of the moral dimensions of our world we risk creating informed cynics who know the price of everything and value of nothing”³⁰ Said President H.T. Rhodes. The most important gift that a child can be given is to help him or her build good behavior leading to development of ethical life through habit and practice. Ethics of the heart can only be realized with education and formation of children’s conscience in families which is indeed prominent to ethical living. Children or youth ethical shaping is very crucial in the quest for ethical global life since these are the very people who are expected to stand and protect ethical values and hand it over to the next generation. Various individuals are also expected to continue adopting such ethical values during their lives, and influence other people hence achieve higher standards of ethics with positive attitude to life, work for justice, forgiveness, and compassion. In this case parents have indispensable role to play to foster ethical life in families, societies and the entire globe.

Internalizing Parental Education for Ethical Living

Parents have always given their children formative and transformative education. Among the Chagga people of Tanzania, parents ensure that children acquire ethical education they need so as to fit in the social world. *Ipvunda*³¹ system of education has been crucial for lives of individuals as they acquire values like reverence, respect, generosity, self-confidence, courage, honesty, moral guidance and self control to mention a few. This is affirmed by Hans Kung who says “Our life is shaped by the fact that in some areas of society, traditions and obligations are being kept alive which were historically influenced on culture and values of the whole of society”³².

It is unfortunate though that majority of these people especially those in urban areas have a challenge in fulfilling this noble duty. Such educational preparation is for helping individuals to build up strong families in the future, be responsible citizens and diligent people at work³³.

³⁰ Wiley, 1987, pg. 3

³¹ A Chagga word for the systematic and educational formation of the youth.

³² Hans Kung, Yes, pgs. 48

³³ Lucy R. Kimaro, *The role of Religious Education in Promoting Christian-Muslim Dialogue in Africa*. Nairobi, Kenya: CUEA Press, 2011. Pg. 2.

With such kind of formative education it would be a grave blunder for an individual to practice prostitution as Podimattan observes “It is wrong and morally forbidden because of an objective moral defect of the sexual act precisely as human. Prostitution is a type of sexual misbehaviour or misconduct. It is wrong because it is misbehaviour...It is defect in the properly human relations that ought to obtain between man and woman...the defect of prostitution is that it excludes this permanent loving relationship”³⁴ such practice shows lack of respect for self, family and society.

Magesa states that “The indigenous realm is deeply morals-based, with all of its transactions founded on and tending to the fulfillment of harmonious relationship, community building, ...”³⁵ Some of the cultural values found in many societies are still very effective in helping individuals acquire ethical values. This is witnessed with the fact that “the conviction of cultural values are in a real sense the springboard of the Gospel and of its genuine interpretation is a fundamental theme of the consciousness of the council ...treasure of African tradition, the respect for life, and esteem for community and family, family solidarity, support for relatives, respect for the old, the sense of hospitality, judicious preservation of tradition, attachment to dialogue, to settle differences,...so the modern world should be build under the foundation of these values”³⁶. However, for parents to be able to reach this goal they themselves should be role models, they should teach through their lives, that is, by word and deed as a guide to the good life that pleases God. It is important to show how people of virtue are admired and tend to succeed in life for motivation³⁷. The parents have to tell their children, what is good and what is bad, if one has to develop certain amount of virtue, it has to start with children-upbringing, we learn from parents, behave in ways that conform to ethical virtues. It is their task to give children what is called a “moral education”, that is, ethical upbringing and formation of character which children receive from home or other people responsible for such formation of the character³⁸.

Undoubtedly, the use of ethical rather than moral upbringing is to remind us that the virtues that go to make a person’s ethos or character are not concerned with the wellbeing of others only.

³⁴ Felix Podimattan “Moral Dimensions of Prostitution” in *Indian Theological Studies* Vol. XLIII, June 2006, no. 2 pp. 194-234.

³⁵ Laurent Magesa, *What is not sacred: African Spirituality*. New York: Orbis Books, 2013 pg. 152

³⁶ Magesa, pg. 10

³⁷ Geoffrey, pgs 44-46

³⁸ *Ibid.*

Upbringing is the most important way of building children's good behavior. Parents can also prevent the development of dispositions that are esteemed to be bad. The challenge is the actual outcome from the upbringing, character defects entails one is not brought up well. As long as parents are responsible for child upbringing, they should be aware of this responsibility, to bring a person up well. What is the child to be like depends on how the conducts of parents have influenced him/her character. Nevertheless, the style of education and formation that some parents give their children is noble and unique as observed by Magonet:

A man sent his son to the Yeshiva, the Talmudic academy, to study Talmud for five years. When he returned the Father met him, took him aside into his study and asked him what he had learnt. The Son replied: 'I learnt that the greatest teaching is "you shall love your neighbour as yourself". But you knew that before you went away! said the father. 'you didn't need five years of study to find that out! The difference, 'said the son' is that now I know that it means: "I must love my neighbour as myself"³⁹

In the similar perspective ethics uncovers what remains unsaid and in so doing, illuminates the support upon which the theories and praxis rely. Are parents and other stake holders in families today acquitted with golden rule which is at least found in almost all religions, 'do not do to another what you would not want to be done to you? When I visited Rwanda in June 2013, a friend took me to a family where a Hutu man saved the lives of three Tutsi girls whose parents had been killed. The man had hid the girls in the toilet for three months without the knowledge of the family members. He gave the girls his share of food and did not want even his children to know because they would not be able to keep the secret, and so this would not only cause the death of the girls but would also cost his own life. He said that everybody else in the family was celebrating and boasting for killing so many Tutsis. The man waited until it was a bit safe, then he handed the girls to the UN officials, so the girls survived the 1994 genocide⁴⁰. Later the man called his children and told them what he had done, and commanded them to do the same, that is what it means to be a neighbour to someone.

³⁹ Jonathan Magonet "Judaism and a global Ethic" in *Yes to a Global Ethic* Hans Kung ed) pp. 96.

⁴⁰ In 1994 there was genocide in Rwanda where more than 800,000 majority Tutsi and Hutu moderates were killed by Hutu Extremists due to tribal hatred.

This man is seen as an icon, a truly model and an example to be emulated not only by his children, but by the present and next generations. This is what one can call practical ethics rooted in the heart.

Parents have a noble duty to teach their children religious ethical living through their own lives. It has been noted that people with higher degree of intrinsic religiosity tend to be more moral, more conscientious and more disciplined for that matter. It means that character education will not succeed without spiritual revival. Through the spiritual disciplines Christians become holier, trying to live up to God's standards⁴¹. These views concerning the need of religious formation for the transformation of moral values are affirmed by Hans Kung "we affirm that a common set of core values is found in the teachings of religions and that these form the basis of a global ethic"⁴² In addition to that "Earth cannot be changed for the better unless we achieve a transformation in the consciousness of individuals and in public life, such transformation must also be achieved in the area of ethics and values⁴³.

Christian values serve as foundation for a descent society,⁴⁴ and parents have a key role to play to ensure that their children at home and school continue to grow as people with integrity. It is not a matter of intellectual gymnastics but rather it is action. Through religious education the hearts as well as heads must be touched to avoid many negatives including teenage pregnancy, careless shooting, drug and alcohol abuse, horrifying instances; and instead developing ethical skills as well as habits and dispositions such as honesty and self control, responding to situations ethically, integrating the values of caring with what they learn, trust, respect and responsibility to mention a few. John Paul II in his encyclical *Familiaris Consortio* "the family is...the place of origin and the most effective means for humanizing and personalizing society: it makes an original contribution in depth to building up the world, by making possible a life that is properly speaking human, in particular guarding and transmitting virtues and 'values' ..."⁴⁵

⁴¹ Geoffrey, pg. 31.

⁴² Hans Kung and Karl J. Kuschel A Global Ethic: the Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions. New York: Continuum. Pg. 14

⁴³ Hans Kung and Kuschel Karl pg. 34-35

⁴⁴ Fede, 1986, pg. 9. Or Lantos pg. 13

⁴⁵ John Paul II "The Christian Family in the modern World" no. 43, "in Austin Flannery (ed) Vatican Council II: More Post Conciliar Documents, Vol. 2, New Delhi: St. Pauls. Pg. 878.

Parents who strive to be good role models teaching their children the core virtues with code of conduct to support them can transform not only their children but can also inspire children from other families. In this case, religious and spiritual aspect of formation is still vital in the whole process of ethical shaping of an individual's life. When confronted with dilemmas, the first to be consulted is God. This is a part of our personal beliefs; we are constantly dealing with other people to whom religious values are important, but also for others religion is not an issue. In that case, ethical decisions and actions are likely where there is moral character⁴⁶ accompanied by virtue skills.

Can Virtues be taught in Families?

According to Kitururu “The word virtue comes from the Latin word *virtus* which means excellence. A virtue is that which enables human beings to excel in behavior. Virtues include: prudence, temperance, fortitude, justice, faith, charity, and hope...”⁴⁷ In a similar view Wadell states “A virtue is a moral skill that enables a person to fathom in a situation precisely how the good can be done or needs to be done. Ethics is a practical science, dealing with concrete, everyday behavior...”⁴⁸ Accordingly, virtues form the hinge of moral or axis on which the moral life turns. Without these virtues one cannot sustain the journey to the good, especially if progress is to be made in moral life. One must be prudent, just, temperate, and courageous in order to navigate successfully in the life journey of turbulent waters of the world challenges. There are four cardinal virtues identified by Wadell which “express some aspect or ingredient of every virtue, so that every virtue shows itself in some way as prudence, in some way as justice, in some way as temperance, and in some way as fortitude. The cardinal virtues mark four qualities an act must have if it is to be virtuous”⁴⁹.

The virtue of prudence for instance, is demonstrated through words, deeds, open heart and mind of individual which are the sign of maturity.

⁴⁶ Geoffrey, pg. 21.

⁴⁷ Beatus B. A. Kitururu, *The Spirituality of hospitality: African and New Testament Perspectives*, Nairobi, Kenya: CUEA Press, 2009, pgs. 58-59.

⁴⁸ Wadell, pgs. 1004-1005.

⁴⁹ Wadell, pg. 1004.

Ability for discernment and wisdom are crucial for one to make rational decision for the well-being of an individual and society. Treating people with respect and self-respect demonstrates personal good behavior; which in great extent children learn from their families and develop as they naturally grow up. However, religious education also plays a role as Geoffrey considers virtues as transcendental constants that are timeless and not bound by culture⁵⁰. This can be related to Kiswahili⁵¹ saying that “*Mtoto umleavyo ndiyo akuavyo*” which means “the child grows up the way he/she is brought up”. It implies that someone cannot acquire behaviors which are totally different from how he/she is brought up, since virtue develops gradually.

Self denial is understood as the most vital way to demonstrate person’s virtuous life which cannot authentically be taught in schools; instead it is a behavior that a person builds up not in a short time but for a long time. Many great people who have demonstrated good example and model to humanity like Gandhi of India, Nyerere of Tanzania, Mother Theresa of Calcutta, Nelson Mandela of South Africa just to mention a few made a lot of sacrifice. These people can be considered as virtuous for their self-denial which enabled others to experience liberation and justice. Looking at the life experience of such great people one could be inspired to embrace values that uphold human dignity. Locke affirms this view by saying that future virtuous adults must not only practice self-denial but also to see the rational path⁵². In relation to that Magesa observes “...Students need to pay great attention to the lived experience, the fundamental dimension of shared human existence. But since lived experience is differently expressed by the different people and communities ... these traditions may be independently evaluated to see whether they are good or bad in relation to the best interests of universal existence”⁵³. Therefore individuals can be helped to reason rightly in their lives and parents need to create a habit in their children of thinking sensibly, hence, making it a behavior which develops little by little.

Virtuous life is the best way to approach ethical and spiritual life, because virtues respect one’s potential to grow in the beauty of goodness, the promise of life, and to the wholeness proper of human nature.

⁵⁰ Geoffrey, pg. 41

⁵¹ Kiswahili is the language spoken by most of the East African people. It is a national language in Tanzania and Kenya and has a lot of wisdom in its sayings.

⁵² Tarcov, Nathan, Locke’s Education for liberty. Chicago:University of Chicago Press (1984), pg. 10.

⁵³ Magesa, 2013, pg. 6

The foundation of virtues in the life of individuals is the family, since it is in the families where activities develop into behavior. Repeated good habits bring quality of life and parents play a great part. Virtues are manifested in one's life and measured through the individual's outstanding behavioral excellence; thus bringing the person to his or her fullest development⁵⁴. Virtuous person makes crucial and authentic decisions without regret. On one hand "Virtues are needed to cultivate an appropriate relationship to all the goods that develop human nature...The virtues recognize the need to develop habits that incline one to whatever is best..."⁵⁵. On the other hand, virtues are important to overcome vice which are also habits that make both deeds and persons bad, diminishes, dehumanizes and destroys human dignity. Vice manifest in tendencies of corrupt behavior which can also grow unless uprooted through the skilled practice of virtue. Additionally, Wadell,⁵⁶ asserts that:

The moral anthropology of an ethic of virtue argues that virtue come where vices either used to be or readily can be. Justice works against selfishness. Temperance works against debasing behavior. Courage wars with cowardice. Men and women are a blend of conflicting forces. Virtue always has an opposite, either in the form of an already acquired habit or its inclination. Therefore, even as virtue grows, there remains a tension to the moral life; for instance, when one strives to be good, the hold of sin can still be powerful...Virtue is acquired by taking on the quality of good act, such as justice; however, the same is true of a vice. Vices are acquired by taking on the quality of bad act, such as cruelty, and the longer the vice has characterized a person, the deeper it grows, becoming part of the fabric of the person's personality...

It must be noted that virtues work for the good while vices focus on the opposite. Many times people choose according to what they have grown comfortably with, that is why at adult age it becomes very challenging to change the behavior. Some Kiswahili sayings affirm this "*Mbwa Mzee hafundishwi kubweka*" literally means "An old dog cannot be taught how to bark" or "*Samaki mkunje angali mbichi*" meaning "bend the fish when it is still wet". The two Swahili sayings imply that individual's behaviors cannot start at the later age, but one has to act several times from early years of life, keep being corrected and developing self initiatives to repeat the activity.

⁵⁴ Paul J. Wadell, "Virtue" in *The dictionary of Catholic spirituality* (Michael Downey ed). Collegeville, Minnesota: A michael Glazier Book The Liturgical Press, 1993. Pg. 998.

⁵⁵ Wandell, pg.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 1001

It is in this context, that the shaping of children's behaviors in families as they grow is achieved. In connection with that, Wandell states that "a habit is a firm and predictable way of acting rooted in a quality of the person"⁵⁷. Nevertheless, a habit to be a virtue it has to become part of the person that is truly a quality of the self; developed by practice. Geoffrey adds that, to be ethical and have moral character, one must not only know the good, one must also love the good (moral feeling) and want to do the good (moral action)⁵⁸.

As mentioned earlier, development of virtue takes time, it is not fickle and sporadic but firm and predictable. A person with good behavior has been mastered by goodness, so much so that doing good is second nature, so a single action is not enough to produce a virtue, it is a process, gradually shaped. Virtues grow in the person who possesses them, for instance, the growth of justice occurs not in the virtue itself but in the degree that a person has the virtue of justice. One practices justice, then becomes more just, hence ready to demonstrate this behavior leading virtuous life. It can be argued that ethical virtue is natural to human being but tempted to what is not good by standards of practical reason. Indeed the issue of justice is a critical concern in ethical life of our time as stated by Hans Kung and Kuschel "We condemn the social disarray of the nations, the disregard for justice which pushes citizens to margin; the anarchy overtaking our communities and the insane death of children from violence..."⁵⁹. On a similar note Magesa adds "The ethics of human dignity require equitable participation by all in various dimensions of the economy."⁶⁰

Conversely, it must be noted that ethical virtue can develop from the support we get from outside, we are in need of ethical upbringing which is part of the human formation in life. On one hand, behavior is practiced and kept in the life of that individual. On the other hand, "In the moral life, a virtue that is not exercised in proportion to its possession will begin to decay"⁶¹. Very often there is a disconnection from knowing what is right and doing what is right. It can be argued that acquiring knowledge about these virtues is not enough; to apply the knowledge of good alone does not necessarily lead to commitment to doing good, for example, people know that to drink too much spoils health but drink anyway.

⁵⁷ Wandell, pg. 1004.

⁵⁸ Geoffrey, P. Lantos pg. 24.

⁵⁹ Hans Kung and Kuschel Karl pg. 13

⁶⁰ Magesa, pg. 53

⁶¹ Ibid.

In this perspective virtue is not only knowledge but also is having the wisdom and the will to do what is right, the power to carry out the minds of judgment into action.

In fact the hard part of morality is not knowing what is right but doing it as stated by St. Paul in the Romans (7:19) “For I do not do the good I want, but I do the evil I do not want”. Ethical reasoning is not just about knowledge it is about choices between right and wrong, and good and bad, it is meant to transform not to control, it is almost impossible to overcome our temptations on our own, hence, for Christians to do good needs is a will which is transformed by Christ. Explicitly, head and heart need to be involved in the ethical action. At times the need for motivation or desire is critical. It therefore follows that virtue cannot be effectively taught via readings or lectures alone, knowing that a given action is wrong does not do any good if we lack the motivation to avoid engaging in that conduct, there is a wide gap, between knowing and doing in the moral realm. It can be stated that 99% of virtues in human life are mostly acquired through inspiration⁶² and repeated behaviors accompanied with challenges.

Challenges

One of the greatest challenge is few role models from our countries, continents and the world that exhibit the great virtues. From Christian perspective, anything to do with Christian virtue is vital in helping the individuals to live good life not just a successful, happy and rewarding life as in secular world but life that pleases God. Moral courage which entails to act on ones convictions even if it costs something is not strongly demonstrated communities. It is to have nobleness of mind and heart especially forgiveness, patience, perseverance, sympathy, fellow feeling, benevolence, generosity, honor, self-discipline, selflessness and others. For instance having people who put forgiveness in practice like Pope John Paul 11 and Nelson Mandela is a challenge. The really predicament is not to know all these but to live the life itself.

Observation shows that there is a crisis of orientation where some traditional ethical standard is disappearing.

⁶²Geoffrey pg. 25

The youngest generation seems not to know about the societal moral directives, but at the same time must cope with a confusion of values the extent of which it is difficult to estimate. The new generation hardly recognizes criteria for right and wrong, good and evil, of the kind that were still being communicated in the 1950s and 1960s by parents and schools, churches and even politicians⁶³. This has increased the incidences of violation of human rights. In this case, children who do not get adequate formation from families and extended families find themselves in dilemma as regards to authentic ethical living.

Some vices have been commonly accepted although not ethical like corruption, majority of families find a challenge to bring up their children differently. Some innocent people who believe in ethical life find themselves trapped in the system; hence, making a 'U' turn becomes painful and challenging. On a similar note Mwachuku observes that "For the human person, to live the positive change often implies resisting the common or "normal" tendency, and to swim or paddle one's canoe row against the current. This requires a will and decision, perseverance and courage"⁶⁴. Humanity just lives the opposite that is why injustices, selfishness and wars to mention a few have become common. Highlighting about human rights and war Rwiza argues that the use of children as soldiers, and their experience of psychological trauma due to atrocities has profound effect on the child, family and society. "The dignity of moral subject makes each person to be a subject of right. As a moral subject the person is inviolable in that his uniqueness and intangibility remains even in situations where certain acts may tend to contain him or her"⁶⁵.

It is a challenge that capacity for goodness is diminishing and there are elements between men and women that work against genuine well being of life. Apart from that there are powerful tendencies of sin and inner contradiction experienced between recognition of the good that needs to be done and an inability to do it. It shows how difficult it is to acquire virtues. Obviously, human beings and their world is plainly disordered. Additionally, disintegration makes doing good difficult. Besides, corruption of nature through original sin does not completely take away capacity for virtue, it does condition it, and human beings live with conflicting tendencies.

⁶³ Geoffrey, 44-46

⁶⁴ Fortunatus A Mwachuku, *The Courage to Change: Take off your shoes...* Nairobi, Kenya: Kolbe Press, 2003, pg. 13.

⁶⁵ Richard Rwiza N. *Ethics of Human Rights: The African contribution*. Nairobi: CUEA Press 2012. Pp. 13,14.

Hence "...because nature is infirm, there is a need to develop virtue, but that is both difficult and tenuous...sin debilitate human nature. It affects the desire for truth, it weakens love for the good, it deprives one of the capacity to deal with difficulty or temptation"⁶⁶.

Pope Francis analyzes the world ethical situation by saying that "...selfishness, which conflicts with people's ability to live in freedom... such selfishness develops socially-whether it is in the many forms of corruption, so widespread today, or in the formation of criminal organizations, from small groups to those organized on global scale. These groups tear down legality and justice striking at the very heart of the dignity of the person"⁶⁷. For instance, cruelty, torturing and killings with complete lack of compassion as the incident in Bosnia war, where "Serbian soldiers raped a woman when her baby lay beside her, when they were finished with her she asked permission to breast-feed her baby, one of the soldiers took the knife, cut the baby's head off and threw it into the arms of its screaming mother"⁶⁸. Unbeliever cruelty and a grave challenge especially in war zones, how can families teach their children to be virtuous people, shine in goodness is such a situation? Goodness is dulled and can be completely extinguished in the minds and lives of children with such experience.

Some challenges are really common in families such as when "The teen-ager needs to have respect for a parent's opinion; and a parent must be willing to listen to the opinions of the teen-ager ...There are many times when it is essential that parents make final decisions...One young girl said' "The trouble is I don't like Daddy's decisions, but he's always right"⁶⁹. It is important that the adolescent realizes that the father is right; and hence does what is right, but this remains a challenge as some young people do not want to be told that they are wrong. Society has laws that become part of a child's moral sense.

⁶⁶ Wadell, pgs 1000, 1001.

⁶⁷ Francis 1, Fraternity, the Foundation and Pathway to Peace, Message of His holiness Francis for the celebration of the World Peace 1 January 2014, pg. 13.

⁶⁸ Michael Hauskeller, "Moral Disgust" in Ethical Perspectives, journal of the European Ethic Network Vol. 13, No. 4, December 2006. Pp. 571-602

⁶⁹ Shuey, Rebekah M.; Woods, Elizabeth L. and young Esther M. Learning about Children. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company. Pp. 39.

At times young people's actions do not conform to the societal law that is why "Each child learns to accept certain regulations at home, then to accept the rules in school, and, finally, acquires the responsibility to follow and to help make the laws of society"⁷⁰ .

Another challenge is that modern education focuses more on the success in career but not much on ethical life. This is what gives birth to intellectuals who preach self-fulfillment to excess, they mock virtues and this is a problem everywhere around the globe⁷¹. In relation to that John Paul II in his *apostolic Exhortation Catechesi Tradendae* shows a concern on how millions of young people are being prepared to face the rough social, economic and political life. Preparation for young people in their early period of life with ethical values is vital if the nations need good citizens. The training at early time will easily influence their hearts, to be good children and young people⁷². However, anxiety in the contemporary world is a sign that millions and millions of young generation do not get sound grounding for their religious and ethical life. The fact that young people are "...dominated by uncertainty and fear, seduced by the escapism of indulgence or drugs, or tempted by nihilism and violence..."⁷³. With such a situation it becomes a challenge for families and community to help them turn their hearts to God.

The fact that parents lack zeal in their duty to develop their children character as regards to religious teachings is a challenge. Majority of parents seem to have failed in fulfilling their mission of forming their children according to the biblical truth, hence, failure to transform them into ethical citizens which is affecting the global ethics of this generation and the one of the future.

However, for others it is a spiritual struggle between new nature and situations in the world. Another challenge is that moral education is left to individual child's family. The society cannot do much, especially where morality and religion are not given enough respect.

⁷⁰ Shuey, pg. 40.

⁷¹ Hans Kung Yes to a global Ethic. New York: Continuum ppg. 75.

⁷² John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation: Catechesi Tradendae* of his holiness Pope John Paul II to the Episcopate, the Clergy and the Faithful of the Entire Catholic Church on Catechesis in our Time, Bangalore: St. Paul Publications, 1979, pp. 42.

⁷³ John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, pp. 43.

Emphasis on careerism and professional Education for the future jobs (knowledge and skills) continue to dominate the minds of many people and is a challenge. The focus is how to earn the living and not how to live (wisdom)⁷⁴.

Apart from that there are many challenges brought by the modern life where several parents abandon their responsibility to educate their children. Evasion of this duty is made easy for them by the presence of television. Some parents have failed to protect the children from mass media which encourages some forms of aggression⁷⁵. Implication of mass media, peers and internet are weakening social institutions of religious organizations and families. They compete with them for moral authority, also children spend less time with parents today, young people are influenced by drug abuse, for instance there are 600,000 addicted children in USA, and 6% of boys between 16 and 18 carry guns for protection in US. There are so many cases of murder in the TV at least 800 annually and 80,000 acts of violence⁷⁶. Consequently, Pope Francis observes that humanity is experiencing a turning point in its history, where the joy of living frequently fades, due to lack of respect for others and violence which are on the rise. This shows that it is a struggle to live and, often, to live with precious little dignity.⁷⁷

Ultimate decision on what is wrong and right has been left for the individuals, respect for self and others. Some parents teach that right and wrong are just matters of personal preferences hence children are left to make decisions of their own. Moreover, they are influenced by peers which is misleading, leading them astray, using feelings not intellect, reject the technology of homes and Churches. Up to 20 years old young people need guidance because they lack the experience in dealing with moral issues that their elders have, lack of ethical values result into violence, moral decline, at home and in schools, bullying and hatred become a severe challenge⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Geoffrey P. Lantos, 2002, pg. 4.

⁷⁵ John Paul 11, *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 76.

⁷⁶ Geoffrey Lantos, pg. 4.

⁷⁷ Francis 1, *The Joy of the Gospel :Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium* of the Holy Father Francis to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World, Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa. no. 52, pgs. 34.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, pg. 12

Recommendations

Majority of people complain about the losing ground of the ethical life around the globe. So there is a need to encourage families to contribute in bringing up children who are ready to protect the physical, spiritual and moral beauty of humanity through denouncing unethical inclination and behavior in our societies and instead foster moral standards.

It is important that families continue to use religious education as a way of helping children and youth to acknowledge God, live positively and be able to resist what looks like normal, but unprincipled moral life. Let children learn from families to be honesty and caring which are the universal values, and be encouraged to make right and rational decisions by parents and other stakeholders.

Governments of our time through agreed education programmes should support families that struggle to raise children with upright behavior, because there is too much emphasis on the intellectual development and the neglect of genuine moral training. Emphasis on ethical life can lead to character education where right and wrong are not only clearly understood but also practiced in daily life. It is also imperative that children in families are trained to face challenges especially conflict resolution, how to deal with hostile situation. The impact of many wars and incidents of violence have caused many deaths and atrocities that degrade human life.

Awakening of Spiritual powers for the transformation of the inner life of an individual and collective consciousness, meditations, prayer or positive thinking, for the conversion of the heart, to help individuals be ready to sacrifice and risk in order to bring fundamental change in our ethical global situations; regarding the environment, social, economic, and political life; in order to enhance human dignity and friendly ways of life. This is important for the individuals' preparation for inner peace, as opposed to violence.

The parents need to help the children's faculties be integrated into a living relationship with God, genuine education in faith, which has deep positive effects as regards to the child's moral and religious life. Young people need a lot of wisdom from religious teachings as lived by parents and other stakeholders due to deep questions that they have, anguish, frustrations, and mistrust.

It is important that they engage in dialogue with themselves and be able to make right decision for themselves and for others. They must know what to accept or what to reject lucidly, conscious of their own responsibility, must be able to denounce selfishness and embrace generosity, justice, charity and peace.

Families should get for their children other forms of entertainment that are more wholesome physically, morally and spiritually formative. Parents need to practically ensure that the use of media in families is carefully regulated, to avoid exposing children to so many violent images that prepare them to be aggressive. They can watch programmes that encourage self-sacrifice, detachment, justice, reconciliation, forgiveness and forbearance to mention a few.

Conclusion

In a nut shell the full realization of Global ethics cannot be achieved if families do not carry out their noble duty effectively and efficiently. The training of the will is that every parent needs to be aware of the process which demands patience, wisdom and sacrifice; because children and the young generation in general change following what is happening in scientific and technological world. Since the human beings have intrinsic dignity, to foster ethical life, to train the character and eventually transforming needs resilience as children and young need to be reminded about the right and wrong, to be corrected and be encouraged where they have tried to be ethical. In every religion on earth there is special encouragement about what is the true ethical living.

Religious education should enable children in families discover that human beings have intrinsic dignity and unalienable rights but also have responsibility for what they do and what they do not do. All our decision, omissions and even failures have consequences that is why there is a need to pass on the sense of responsibility to the future generations, because our failures today will affect the future age group. Therefore there is a need to effectively deal with ethical living encouraging young people to acknowledge and appreciate God's love for peace and humankind. Finally wisdom is crucial to enable individuals distinguish clearly the path of life to follow, focusing to harvest the fruits of the kingdom and not what runs counter to God's plan.

This involves not only listening to discerning spirit, but also striving to decisively choose movements of the spirit of good and reject those of the spirit of evil⁷⁹. Prudence is fundamental in the quest for the common ethical living, relating to what Hans says that “For there can be no human survival without a common human ethic, a global ethic”⁸⁰

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⁷⁹ Francis 1, The Joy of the Gospel :Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium of the Holy Father Francis to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World, Nairobi, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa. no. 51, pgs. 33-34

⁸⁰ Hans Kung and Kuschel Karl , pg. 43

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