

could be considered a moral evil. This leaves us with many more questions. Could conscious effort to contract marriages within ones own caste be suspected as a wilful act of discrimination? Can opposition to contracting marriage with a partner from another caste be considered a sin? Shall we say that preventing intercaste marriages will amount to a grave sin? Can inaction for the promotion of intercaste marriage and prevention of caste endogamy become a sin of omission? And finally could caste endogamy be considered an intrinsically moral evil because: i) It authenticates the existing discriminatory practices among people of different castes. ii) It perpetrates the caste system which is upheld in a very effective way through marriage systems. iii) It becomes a cradle of caste discrimination when the family brings children to be born into a particular caste to be socialized into the caste ridden society?

The following *suggestions* may enable individuals to respond to this morally evil situation arising in an atmosphere where endogamy dominates the consciousness of the people: i) denounce adherence to a particular caste, ii) stop operating for the interest of a particular caste as an individual or as a group, iii) announce allegiance to caste equality, iv) work for caste equality. Specifically, help children to socialize in an atmosphere of equality among castes, v) work for promoting intercaste marriages.

Pastoral guidelines to handle the moral evil of caste endogamy:

The march towards the ideal of one human community as the image of God is actualized through specific operations of a long process. All the energy and resources at our disposal should be spent for operationalizing the process which includes. i) proper catechizing for the formation of conscience which will regard rightly any discriminatory practices of caste as morally evil, ii) proper socialization which will avoid the situations of moral evil by providing opportunities for intercaste dining, live-ins and other closer contacts for removing prejudices and building up relationship, iii) instructions on the equality of human persons as images of God during marriage preparation, in order to conscientize Christians on the intrinsically moral evil of endogamy as an instrument of perpetuation of caste, which leaves them with the responsibility to fight against it.

Conclusion:

Conner presents interpersonal love as the key to understand Christian marriage. Caste endogamy places hurdles in the flowering of interpersonal relationships between persons ascribed to various castes.

Moral evaluation of caste endogamy, I believe, is a step towards restoring dignity of persons as images of God. Theological thinking and writing on endogamy can be seen as a seed falling on the rock. It will struggle to germinate. Once it germinates and grows against all odds, the rock could no longer resist—a beautiful tree is sure to grow and blossom spreading the fragrance and showering the fruits of human love at its best—divine love—union with God.

In January 1982, The Indian Catholic Hierarchy had issued its statement on caste:

We state categorically that caste, with its consequent effects of discrimination and "caste mentality", has no place in Christianity. It is in fact a denial of Christianity — because its is inhuman. It violates the God-given dignity and equality of the human person. God created man in his own image and likeness. He accepts and loves every human being without distinction.¹⁹

The struggle continues. Fresh blood needs to be injected to carry on the struggle. The emerging Dalit consciousness in the country calls us to take up the challenge with renewed vigour.

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