

**A R T Y K U Ł Y**

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**THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN EDUCATING CHILDREN  
FOR THE FAITH**

**A b s t r a c t.** One of the major responsibilities of the Christian Family is not only taking care of their children but also the education of the children for the faith. This role which is so important today is iterated in many Church documents. This is not a recent addition to the responsibilities of the family; in fact, it has been the responsibility of the family since biblical times. This paper seeks to highlight the importance of the role of the family in the education for the faith of children, starting as far back as biblical times, and reaching our contemporary times by reviewing the most important Church documents. Once the role of the family in educating for the faith of children is established, then some practical ways in which the family can educate for the faith today are discussed.

**Key words:** evangelisation, family, education for the faith, children, Witness.

Today, much is said about the role of the family in accompanying and educating the children for the faith. The difficulty always remains more on the 'how' than on the 'what' of how the family is to educate the children for the faith. This paper attempts at giving a number of possibilities by means of which parents can educate their children for the faith. The point of departure is to define what we mean by the family because this is an asset for what will follow. What will follow is a bird's eye view of the role of the family in educating for the faith of children in biblical times. This demonstrates that the family was always a protagonist in the education for the faith of children. Finally, a number of models and of types of education for the

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faith of children within the family and by the parents will be discussed. These models and types of education for the faith are characterised by being informal and occasional, and by their being situated in daily life contexts.

## 1. TOWARDS A WORKING DEFINITION OF THE FAMILY

Defining the family in our post-modern world is no easy task. The term 'family' has been over-used and at times even abused of. It is not the aim of this paper to enter into, and discuss the new nuances being given to the term 'family' in our contemporary culture. However, a working definition will help us to reduce ambiguity when speaking about the family today, which although being referred to as 'family' has made drastic changes in its composition, ranging from single-parent families to same-sex unions. Notwithstanding this over-inflation of meanings, we need to avoid ingenuous and simplistic definitions which may render the family obscure just the same.

For the purpose of this paper, the term 'family' or more precisely 'Christian family' is going to be limited to the way in which the Church has always defined and considered the family in its official documents. The best and most synthetic definition of a 'Christian family' can be found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which defines the Christian family as „A man and a woman united in marriage, together with their children”<sup>1</sup>.

## 2. THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN BIBLICAL TIMES

Today, and as time goes by, there seems to be the wrong impression that the role of the family in educating the faith of their children is a recent attempt by the Church to give back to parents their role of being the primary

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<sup>1</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (11<sup>th</sup> October 1992) (online: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc\\_css/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a4.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a4.htm)) accessed on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2015 no. 2202. One may also look at other documents of the Church which in other words express the same ideas, however not in such a direct way: Vatican Council II. *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World „Gaudium et Spes”* (7<sup>th</sup> December 1965) (online: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html)) accessed on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2015 no. 48; JOHN PAUL II. *Apostolic Exhortation „Familiaris Consortio” on the role of the Christian family in the Modern World* (22<sup>nd</sup> November 1981) (online: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jpii\\_exh\\_19811122\\_familiaris-consortio.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jpii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html)) accessed on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2015 no. 11, 15.

educators of their children in the faith. By doing this, parents become involved in the education and Christian upbringing of their children. This is undoubtedly an unfounded argument which is still prevalent in many circles. Still, it can be easily overcome by looking at the role of the family, even as far back as in biblical times, where the father assumed the responsibility for transmitting the faith to his children<sup>2</sup>. The family in biblical times was an active agent in imparting the faith to children<sup>3</sup>.

The Author of the Book of Deuteronomy shows a particular interest in the role of the family in educating their offspring for the faith. In Deuteronomy, the faith is not only handed down to children by the family in the form of the teaching of the Torah, but also through the celebration and the memorial of events on a cultural level<sup>4</sup>. The point of departure of the education of the faith of children in the family, especially through the father figure, is the profession of the faith in One God – a profession which is central to the entire Old Testament: „Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Dt 6, 4-5)<sup>5</sup>. However, this is only the point of departure<sup>6</sup>. What follows this commandment of the love of the one and only God, is an exhortation and a directive or instruction at the same time: „Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise” (Dt 6, 6-7).

In Deuteronomy 6, 6-7, the role and responsibility of the parents in educating their children for the faith is clear. The parents have the responsibility to teach and educate their children about the one true God. It is the parents who have the major responsibility in showing their belief in God through whatever they say and through whatever they do. Moreover, this duty is not

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<sup>2</sup> We need to keep in mind that in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, the family was based on the patriarchal model. A. LEMAIRE. *Education – Ancient Israel*. In: *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Ed. D. Noel Freedman. Vol. 2. New York–London–Toronto–Sydney–Auckland: Doubleday 1992 p. 306.

<sup>3</sup> C. BISSOLI. *La Catechesi Familiare*. In: *Andate e insegnate. Manuale di Catechetica*. Ed. Istituto di Catechetica – Università Pontificia Salesiana. Leumann (To): Editrice Elledici 2002 p. 296.

<sup>4</sup> A. TESSAROLLO. *La fede dei Padri. Figura e ruolo del 'padre' nell'educazione alla fede*. „Catechesi” 79:2009-2010 no. 2 p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> All biblical references are taken from the online NRSV Catholic Edition. Cf. [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com), accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2015.

<sup>6</sup> A. TESSAROLLO. *La fede* p. 19.

limited to particular places or to particular timeframes. The parents are called to speak to their children about God at all times of the day, whether they are about to rise or to rest. Nor are parents limited to speaking about God only in private, at home but on the streets also. This demonstrates the extent to which parents were responsible for educating their children for the faith in Old Testament times, a responsibility from which they could neither retract nor could it be delegated. Moreover, such a task required that parents would themselves be convinced of such a teaching and that such teaching is at heart, thus inspiring their daily lives in practice. It is afterwards that they can become the object of dialogue and of education within the family<sup>7</sup>.

The children also played an active role in their own education for the faith, by asking questions which then explained the meaning of what was being taught to them<sup>8</sup>:

When your children ask you in time to come, “What is the meaning of the decrees and the statutes and the ordinances that the Lord our God has commanded you?” then you shall say to your children, “We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. The Lord displayed before our eyes great and awesome signs and wonders against Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his household. He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land that he promised on oath to our ancestors” (Dt 6, 20-23)<sup>9</sup>.

Notwithstanding this, the role of educating children in the faith was not limited only to the parents teaching their children in a direct way about the faith in one God. Israel as a people celebrated several feasts whose celebrative aspect was used to educate and teach children in the faith through their actual and personal involvement in the celebration of such festivals<sup>10</sup>. The most outstanding Jewish celebration which had a pedagogical characteristic was the Feast of the Passover.

The Feast of the Passover offered the ideal setting for the narration of the passage of the Jewish people from the slavery of Egypt to the Promised Land. The text used for the Passover meal was inspired and drawn from Deuteronomy. It was during this celebrative rite that the youngest child asked the father why that night in which they were celebrating the *Haggadah* was different from the other nights. The response was in the form of a detailed narration

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 20.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> There are other passages similar to this one: Josh 4, 20ff and Ex 12, 25-27.

<sup>10</sup> A. LEMAIRE. *Education* p. 309.

of the Jewish slavery in Egypt and how God guided them to freedom<sup>11</sup>. The annual Passover Meal in the Jewish family consisted of a pedagogical itinerary in which the entire family recounted the story of the salvation of the Jewish People from the bondage of Egypt by the mighty hand of God.

In the New Testament we get a continuation of this tradition<sup>12</sup>. This continuation is not in the form of an explanation of what used to take place in the faith education of children, but in the attestation that the family was the normal vehicle for the transmission of the faith to children. This is mostly evident in the Second Letter to Timothy where Paul praises the faith which Timothy inherited from his mother directly and in an indirect manner from his grandmother: “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you” (2 Tm 1, 5).

### 3. THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN FAITH FORMATION TODAY

While parents are called to do their utmost to impart the faith to their children, they must always keep in mind that it is the Holy Spirit who plays a primary role in the transmission of the faith to children. In fact, the Holy Spirit is the primary agent, instilling the faith in children and helping them to respond positively to it and accept it. The parents are only secondary instruments through which the faith is immediately transmitted to children<sup>13</sup>. Faith is always a gift and a grace of God. However, parents in their endeavours to educate for the faith, act as instruments in the hands of God, thus facilitating, guiding and helping the growth of the faith in their children<sup>14</sup>. This however does not mean that we do away with systematic and programmed catechesis in our parishes and/or Catholic schools.

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<sup>11</sup> The Jewish Federations of North America. *The Passover Haggadah. A Guide to the Seder*(online:[http://www.jewishfederation.org/images/uploads/holiday\\_images/39497.pdf](http://www.jewishfederation.org/images/uploads/holiday_images/39497.pdf)) accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2015.

<sup>12</sup> C. BISSOLI. *La Catechesi* p. 296.

<sup>13</sup> Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory for Catechesis* (15<sup>th</sup> August 1997) (online:[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccclergy/documents/rc\\_con\\_ccatheduc\\_doc\\_17041998\\_directory-for-catechesis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccclergy/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_17041998_directory-for-catechesis_en.html)) accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2015 no. 138.

<sup>14</sup> E. ALBERICH, J. VALLABARAJ. *Communicating a Faith that Transforms. A Handbook of Fundamental Catechetics*. Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications 2004 p. 139-140; E. ALBERICH. *La catechesi oggi. Manuale di catechetica fondamentale*. Leumann (To): Editrice Elledici 2001 p. 146-149.

*Gaudium et Spes*, *Christifideles Laici* and *Familiaris Consortio* envisage that the role of the parents who receive the Sacrament of Marriage is not simply to be fecund and generate children through pro-creation; they are also responsible for the Christian education of their children<sup>15</sup>. It is through this particular ministry of the parents that the entire Christian family becomes a school of faith and embarks on a journey of faith<sup>16</sup>.

Parents are [thus] the primary educators in the faith [...] all members of the family play an active part in the education of the younger members [...] The family is defined as a 'domestic Church', that is, in every Christian family the different aspects and functions of the life of the entire Church may be reflected: mission; catechesis; witness; prayer etc<sup>17</sup>.

The important role which parents play in the education for the faith of the children has also been attested in recent studies which attempted to study the faith. The longitudinal study by Vern L. Bengtson, Norella M. Putney and Susan C. Harris, across four generations, departs from the awareness that the family and religion are functionally connected because they are directly linked to the passing on of standards of moral behaviour and to the continuity of social order<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, parents still seem to be the primary source of influence on the faith of their children<sup>19</sup>. In a recent qualitative study about the faith of the Maltese people, the results show that the family is still the most important entity for the Maltese<sup>20</sup>. A corollary to this is that the family may still be the most influential factor in the faith of children.

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<sup>15</sup> JOHN PAUL II. *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation „Christifideles Laici” on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World* (30<sup>th</sup> December 1988) (online: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_30121988\\_christifideles-laici.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici.html)) accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2015 no. 63; *Gaudium et Spes* no. 61; *Familiaris Consortio* no. 38.

<sup>16</sup> Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory* no. 227.

<sup>17</sup> Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory* no. 255; cf. also JOHN PAUL II. *Apostolic Exhortation „Catechesi Tradendae” on Catechesis in our time* (16<sup>th</sup> October 1979) (online: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_16101979\\_catechesi-tradendae.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae.html)) accessed on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2015 no. 36; JOHN PAUL II. *Familiaris Consortio* no. 2.

<sup>18</sup> V.L. BENGSTON. *Families and Faith: How Religion is Passed down across Generations*. New York: Oxford University Press 2013 p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> V.L. BENGSTON. *Families and Faith* p. 6-7.

<sup>20</sup> *Enigmatic Faith*, Malta, DISCERN – Secretariat for Catechesis, in print.

The influence of parents on the development of the faith of their children had originally been demonstrated by James Fowler, who elaborated on seven stages which attempted at demonstrating the development of the faith in human beings<sup>21</sup>. In the first stage, Fowler speaks of *Undifferentiated Faith*. This stage is linked to infancy and proves to be a very delicate time for the development of faith later on in the child. The child's early experience of safety and care as opposed to neglect and abuse, help the child develop a relation of care and trust with both the world and God. On the other hand, negative experiences and experiences of negligence make the child develop a sense of distrust and doubt about God and the universe<sup>22</sup>. This demonstrates the depth to which the parents influence the faith of their children.

Still, when taking a look around, it may seem that parents are not being so successful in the education of the faith of their children. This may be due to several reasons, amongst which we may find that some parents are not interested in such a responsibility, or that parents are using an inadequate method to educate their children for the faith<sup>23</sup>. A remedy for the latter is postulated by the *General Directory for Catechesis* which states that the education of children for the faith within the family structure should be a "Christian education more witnessed to than taught, more occasional than systematic, more on-going and daily than structured into periods"<sup>24</sup>.

#### 4. EDUCATING FOR THE FAITH IN THE FAMILY

When one considers the responsibility which parents have in educating their children for the faith, a natural question comes to mind: 'What can and are the parents to do in order to educate their children for the faith?' There are a number of initiatives which parents can embark on and which help their children to grow in their faith. However, before speaking about different modes and types of faith formation which can be given in the family, it is essential to outline two

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<sup>21</sup> J.W. FOWLER. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, 1st ed. San Francisco: Harper & Row 1981.

<sup>22</sup> J.W. FOWLER. *Stages* p. 119-121. This stage of development brings to mind the first stage of Erik H. Erikson's psychosocial stages: Trust vs. Mistrust. Cf. E.H. ERIKSON. *Identity and the Life Cycle*. New York-London: W. W. Norton and Company 1980 p. 57-67; E.H. ERIKSON. *The Life Cycle Completed. A Review*. New York-London: W. W. Norton and Company 1982 p. 55-61.

<sup>23</sup> V.L. BENGSTON. *Families and Faith* p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory* no. 255.

important qualities which would render the endeavours of the parents in the education for the faith of their children more fecund.

The first quality is a mature outlook on the faith. This stands in contrast to an infantile outlook. If parents want to be effective in educating their children for the faith, they must primarily shed any infantile traits of their faith. Moreover, they must not consider their children's quest for knowledge with regards to the faith as infantile or irrelevant, and thus evade or ridicule any questions about the faith asked by their children<sup>25</sup>. Doing so would give their children the impression that faith is not important, especially because they decided not to seek to know more about it. On the other hand, parents need not go to the other extreme where they place their own questions and interrogations to the children.

The second quality which is related and emerges as a consequence of the first quality is that parents need to be able to confront difficult issues in their personal faith<sup>26</sup>. If the parents are truly trying to live their faith, then difficulties in living out their faith are to be expected. Parents are called to live and to confront these difficulties together as a couple in an overt way, thus demonstrating to their children that living the faith in a true and active way is not always easy; on the other hand, parents will be able to show that it is not impossible either.

The importance which the Church is called to give to the on-going formation of parents must never be underestimated<sup>27</sup>. The two qualities discussed above can be successfully overcome by a good on-going formation of the parents themselves and by strengthening the faith of the parents through faith formation meetings<sup>28</sup>.

There are a number of initiatives which can help parents in the education for the faith of their children. Most of these different modes of educating for the faith can be used simultaneously and in a harmonious way together in very informal settings. The first and most effective method for evangelisation in the family is through witness<sup>29</sup>. Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* stated that

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<sup>25</sup> A. TESSAROLLO. *La fede* p. 21.

<sup>26</sup> C. NOSIGLIA. *La famiglia, luogo della trasmissione della fede*. "Catechesi" 79:2009-2010 no. 2 p. 27.

<sup>27</sup> C. BISSOLI. *La Catechesi* p. 298.

<sup>28</sup> Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory* no. 227; D. SIMEONE. *Famiglia e Iniziazione Cristiana*. "Evangelizzare" 42:2013 no. 9 p. 540.

<sup>29</sup> E. VERA BARROSO. *Catechesi familiare e ispirazione catecumenale*. "Catechesi" 83: 2013-2014 no. 3 p. 46; J. VALLABARAJ. *Primo Annuncio nell'ambito della famiglia*. "Catechesi" 79:2009-2010 no. 4 p. 34-35; J. VALLABARAJ. *Formazione della famiglia per la comunica-*



contemporary people are not searching for more preachers but for witnesses because they are tired of listening to preachers. Moreover, if contemporary people listen to preachers, it is because these preachers are first witnesses to what they preach<sup>30</sup>. What type of witness is required of parents today? The witness which parents are called to live in their family and which helps the education for the faith of their children is a witness which does not live the faith grudgingly or reluctantly, but with joy and effervescence. This calls for certain visible actions on the part of the parents, such as an overt mutual forgiveness, and the forgiveness of others. This witness also calls for a convergence between what is proclaimed by word of mouth and how one actually lives. This calls parents to put the faith which they profess into action in their daily lives.

The way in which parents live and celebrate the liturgy, especially the Eucharist has a grafting effect on their children<sup>31</sup>. As adults, parents are called to participate in the liturgy in a conscious and active way, and not just simply being present because they are obliged to attend. We frequently hear parents exclaiming that their children are asking them why they as children go to receive Holy Communion, while the parents refrain. This is a counter-witness and may confuse children. Parents can be truly effective instruments in the children's education for the faith by grasping every opportunity to live and to celebrate their faith with their children<sup>32</sup>. Families can also grasp opportunities which are celebrated in the family from time to time, such as the Baptism or Confirmation of a sibling or of a cousin, the Sacrament of Marriage, anniversaries within the family, the death of a loved one or a funeral<sup>33</sup>. These occasions can always be used to evangelise the children and to form their faith in an informal and occasional way<sup>34</sup>.

The narration of stories is becoming one of the fundamental methods for the new evangelisation<sup>35</sup>. Parents are encouraged to narrate their faith to

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zione della fede. "Catechesi" 80:2010-2011 no. 5 p. 71; C. BISSOLI. *La Catechesi* p. 298.

<sup>30</sup> PAUL VI. *Apostolic Exhortation „Evangelii Nuntiandi”* (8<sup>th</sup> December 1975) (online: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19751208\\_evangelii-nuntiandi.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html)) accessed on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2015 no. 41.

<sup>31</sup> M. DAL SANTO. *Il momento domestico nella catechesi dell'Iniziazione Cristiana*. "Catechesi" 84:2014-2015 no. 3 p. 50-52; C. BISSOLI. *La Catechesi* p. 305.

<sup>32</sup> E. Vera BARROSO. *Catechesi familiare* p. 46-49; M. DAL SANTO. *Il momento domestico* p. 50-52.

<sup>33</sup> E. Vera BARROSO. *Catechesi familiare* p. 46; C. BISSOLI. *La Catechesi* p. 305.

<sup>34</sup> JOHN PAUL II. *Catechesi Tradendae* p. 68.

<sup>35</sup> R. TONELLI. *La narrazione come proposta per una Nuova Evangelizzazione*. Roma: LAS 2012; R. TONELLI. *La narrazione nella catechesi e nella pastorale giovanile*. Leumann (To): Elledici 2002 p. 60-66.

their children within the family environment<sup>36</sup>. There are various ways in which this can be done. One may simply opt to narrate the Word of God directly from the Bible. This can be done by either reading biblical stories which are adapted to children directly from the text of the Bible, or else by reading Bible stories which can be found in a children's Bible. The latter offers the added service of using words and terms which are already adapted to children and which children can understand.

Narration can also take a totally different direction by the parents including their personal experience while at the same time narrating the Word of God. This form of narration is more demanding, but at the same time, it is more effective because in the narration, the parents will be narrating three stories in one story: the scene as this is found in the Bible, their personal life stories and experiences, and the experience and life-story of the interlocutor or child<sup>37</sup>. In this way, children feel that they form part of the story being narrated, and they become personally involved and do not simply remain passive receivers of the narration. In this way, children tend to become more easily involved because they become protagonists in the story. These types of narration are very effective and can help parents to transmit their personal experiences of God to their children in an easier way.

The Liturgical Year offers another useful resource to parents in their quest to educate their children for the faith. In this respect, the family may live and celebrate the different times of the Liturgical Year by taking the different periods of the Year into account and trying to live them out in the family<sup>38</sup>. Some periods, such as Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Pentecost offer particular occasions where the parents can educate the faith of their children through domestic activities which highlight the relevance of each of these periods and why they are important in the life of the Church, of the family as a whole and of the children in particular. One may also add the month of May, the feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the feasts of some saints and of patron saints in particular.

The daily routine of the family offers a number of occasions made up of small rites and prayers which offer help to parents in educating their children for the faith<sup>39</sup>. These daily occasions include the prayer before and after

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<sup>36</sup> E. Vera BARROSO. *Catechesi familiare* p. 48; J. VALLABARAJ. *Primo Annuncio nell'ambito della famiglia* p. 36; M. DAL SANTO. *Il momento domestico* p. 50.

<sup>37</sup> R. TONELLI. *La narrazione nella catechesi e nella pastorale giovanile* p. 67-69.

<sup>38</sup> M. DAL SANTO. *Il momento domestico* p. 48-49; C. BISSOLI. *La catechesi* p. 305.

<sup>39</sup> M. DAL SANTO. *Il momento domestico* p. 49-50.

meals, the morning and the evening prayer and other traditional prayers, such as the rosary. Through these short moments of prayer, parents inculcate in their children the need to stop and pray to God, either thanking him or asking him for protection.

A new form of sensibility which is gradually taking ground in families, and which can act as a catalyst for the formation of the faith of children within the family, is the education of the children's awareness to service<sup>40</sup>. This can be achieved in the family through minor services which children may be asked to do, or to take care of, such as keeping their room clean and tidy, or washing the plates. Within the family, one may also encounter instances where hospitality is practiced. One may also have the opportunity to delve in charitable and voluntary actions towards the poor, or have the opportunity to visit sick persons in hospital or retirement homes. These instil in children the need to be of service to others in life, and will help them and actively prepare them to be able to do acts of service and of charity to others later on in life. This is something which is integral to the faith of the Christian. As a consequence, by doing small acts of service at home, children are also being prepared to live the Christian life in an active and positive way.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The contemporary socio-cultural context in which we are living today calls for a strengthening of the role of the family in the education for the faith of children. The family can never do away with its role in the education for the faith of children. However, in doing so, the family is not only fulfilling one of its responsibilities and duties, but it is continuing the Judeo-Christian tradition in taking a primary role in the education for the faith of children. Parents give a lot to their children through small, daily occasions. These occasions give the family the opportunity to live a good Christian life in daily circumstances, and help in the education for the faith of the children through a form of apprenticeship in the faith. It is when the family embarks on these educational instances which are neither programmed, nor systematic but occasional and informal, that the family becomes a truly 'Domestic

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<sup>40</sup> M. DAL SANTO. *Il momento domestico* p. 50; C. BISSOLI. *La catechesi* p. 305.

Church<sup>41</sup>, that is, a micro-ecclesial reality in which we find all the basic elements for evangelisation and education for the faith and for Christian life: the Word of God, moments of prayer and service towards others.

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## ROLA RODZINY W WYCHOWYWANIU DZIECI DO WIARY

### S t r e s z c z e n i e

Jednym z głównych zadań, za które odpowiedzialna jest rodzina chrześcijańska, jest nie tylko opieka nad swoimi dziećmi, lecz także wychowanie ich do wiary. Ta rola, która jest dzisiaj tak ważna, jest wiele razy podkreślana w licznych dokumentach Kościoła. Nie jest to najnowszy dodatek do obowiązków rodziny; jest to w istocie obowiązek rodziny od czasów biblijnych. Artykuł niniejszy stara się uwypuklić wagę roli rodziny w wychowaniu dzieci do wiary, poczynając od czasów biblijnych, aż do czasów nam współczesnych, poprzez odwołanie się do najważniejszych dokumentów Kościoła. Po ustaleniu, jaka jest rola rodziny w wychowywaniu dzieci do wiary, omówione są niektóre praktyczne sposoby, jakie rodzina może w tym celu wykorzystać.

*Tłumaczenie: Tadeusz Karłowicz*

**Słowa kluczowe:** ewangelizacja, rodzina, wychowanie do wiary, dzieci, świadek.