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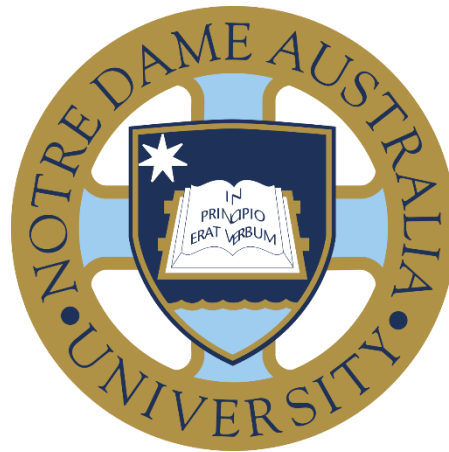
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IDENTIFYING AND IMPLEMENTING
THE THEOLOGY OF THE DOMESTIC CHURCH

By: Mishel Stefanac

A Thesis Submitted
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy



School of Education,
The University of Notre Dame Australia

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Declaration of Authorship

To the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published by another person, except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis is my own work and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any institution.

Signature:

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature.

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Date: 1/10/20

Abstract

This project explores the development of the theology of the domestic church and how it can be implemented in Catholic families. It investigates the origin of the phrase domestic church, traces its development over centuries, and considers the implications this has on the Church and families. The overall objective of this project is to inquire into the significance of this term and identify the principles that ought to be incorporated in a practical resource for families.

The project begins with a comprehensive analysis of the origins of the term domestic church, and how it developed over time. It investigates why this phrase was revived during the Second Vatican Council, after lying dormant for several centuries, and how it developed in the intervening years since the Council. The reintroduction of the term domestic church sparked a renewed interest in the role of the family, and this project takes the view that further developments in this area of theology still remain if we are to understand and support families in their plight to educate children in faith.

Chapter One traces the origin of the domestic church, beginning with its emergence in the Old Testament. It explores the scriptural and patristic teachings of the family through the lens of Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Augustine. What emerges is an integrated understanding of the family, which recognises this cell not just as a series of relationships originating in the procreative love of spouses, but also as the primary place of education in faith.

Chapter Two investigates how and why the idea of the domestic church was recovered during the Second Vatican Council. With an analysis of the contributions made by the pivotal figure, Bishop Pietro Fiordelli, it explores the implications of the *Ressourcement* of this patristic term. This chapter is followed by an outline of Conciliar and post-Conciliar magisterial documents, which furthered the revival of the theology of the domestic church. Chapter Three also takes a more practical focus, considering the initiatives and projects that were suggested by Pope John Paul II to provide concrete support to families in their mission to educate.

Chapter Four then investigates how the post-Conciliar doctrines and suggestions of the *Ressourcement* have been received and applied. Through an analysis of various initiatives on a diocesan and local level, what begins to emerge is a disparity between doctrine and application. This chapter considers the work and contributions of several key figures, namely Bishop Samuel Aquila, Gerard O'Shea, and Joseph Atkinson.

The final chapter extends this investigation, exploring the future direction of the post-Conciliar doctrines. It discusses the current theology of the family, through a Trinitarian-Christocentric lens, and how this can be developed in order to bridge the gap between doctrine and application. This discussion reveals the need to delve deeper into the theology of the domestic church and consider practical ways to provide support for families.

The second part of this project is an intervention program, which applies the research from this thesis into a practical handbook. It is intended to provide parents with the necessary content and tools that will support them in their mission as primary educators, and ultimately assist them in forming their own domestic church.

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My deepest gratitude is offered to my supervisor, Dr. Gerard O'Shea. His guidance, encouragement and friendship extend beyond the work of this thesis. Since our first meeting in February 2011, he has been a pillar or support in my work as a teacher, a student of religious education, and battler in the faith we share. Words will always fall short when I attempt to express how grateful I am to Gerard. Since we first crossed paths, he has been constant in two particular ways that have enabled me to achieve this work: he always believed in my abilities, and he embodied a fatherly figure who demonstrated the love of God the Father. I am sincerely appreciative of all Gerard has done for me over the years, which have culminated in this work.

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As I reflect upon the journey that led me to this Ph.D. I wonder at how, and why, God has brought me to this moment. I never intended on travelling this path, but it is God alone who paved the way to this project. Therefore, all thanks and praise go to God. It is God who sent me many blessings and miracles to enable me to achieve such a task. I have been blessed with an encouraging family, a wonderful education, an abundance of faithful friends, and special supporters along this journey. I also have two heavenly friends, Pope Saint John Paul II and Saint Catherine of Siena. It was through their intercession, and their inspirational lives, that I was able to write the work on these following pages. Saint Catherine was a champion of truth, and Saint John Paul II was a champion of families. It is through their example, and their prayers, that I have come to complete this work on the domestic church. Now I pray that The Lord will continue the work that has been inspired by these great saints.

INTRODUCTION

In 1964, *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, taught:

[T]he family is, so to speak, the domestic church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children; they should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care vocation to a sacred state.¹

Adding to this, the fathers of the Second Vatican Council identified the procreation and education of children as the primordial end of both the institution of marriage and conjugal love.² These words reintroduced the Patristic understanding of the family to the Church's theological discourse about marriage, an understanding which emphasises that the duty of educating children in the faith is inherent and proper to parenthood. This patristic revival, and the intervening years since the Second Vatican Council, has seen a renewed interest in the family and a stronger emphasis on the theological significance of the domestic church.

Until now, there has been a limited amount of scholarship pertaining to the domestic church. However, a closer reading of scripture, complimented with the ancient sources of the Church Fathers, will clearly establish the theological foundation of the nature and mission of the family. This thesis traces five waves of development throughout the trajectory of the Church: the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Early Church, the Second Vatican Council, and the pontificate of John Paul II. An analysis of this theological development will demonstrate the important role of the family in the life of the Church. This thesis will examine the teachings on the domestic church, as evidenced in these five waves, and determine whether these teachings have a practical application for families.

The thesis begins with a historical analysis of the family in the Old Testament, examining the distinct roles of each family member in relation to the faith. What emerges is the characterisation of the family as a *Covenant Bearer*. This chapter proceeds to explore the role of the family in the New Testament, seeing its nature and mission develop in light of its transformation in Christ. These first two waves identify how the family develops from being

¹ Second Vatican Council, "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 21 November, 1964," in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1975), sec. 11 (hereafter cited as LG).

² Second Vatican Council, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, 7 December, 1965," in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1975), sec. 48 (hereafter cited as GS): "By their very nature, the institution of matrimony itself and conjugal love are ordained for the procreation and education of children, and find in them their ultimate crown."

the bearer of the covenant to partakers in the *mystêrion* (Eph 5:32-33). The first chapter continues to trace the development of the family in its third wave, with an analysis of the writings from the Church Fathers, who identified the domestic church as an ecclesial entity. It examines the nature and mission of the family through the lens of Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Augustine to determine the origin of the phrase domestic church. Chapter One will argue that those characteristics, which are proper to the family in both the Old Testament and New Testament, are not mere social constructs but are an authentic part of the Church. Thus, it will be argued that the family is more than a social entity and indeed a foundational cell in the Church, whose very role is to transmit the covenant of our faith.

Chapter Two investigates the reintroduction of the patristic term domestic church, a term that endured a lengthy period of dormancy since the time of the Church Fathers. It will explore the debates and documents of the Second Vatican Council to determine how, and why, the process of reviving this patristic idea made its way into the Church's consciousness. It analyses the contributions made by Bishop Pietro Fiordelli, who pioneered the revival of the domestic church into the discussion of the Council. It will be contended that Fiordelli, who was the catalyst for the domestic church, inspired the fourth wave of theological development pertaining to the family. This chapter will argue that the recovery of the domestic church sparked a renewed interest in the ecclesial significance of the family.

The fifth wave of theological development gained momentum in the intervening years from the Second Vatican Council, reaching a crescendo during the pontificate of Pope John Paul II. When he famously declared, "the future of humanity passes by way of the family"³ he understood the indispensable role of families in cultivating a school in the home, whereby parents were endowed with the duty to nurture their children. Through greater analysis of his writings pertaining to the family and an evaluation of the role of the family in the history of the Church, this aforementioned quote can be rephrased to argue that the future of *the faith* passes by way of the family. Therefore, Chapter Three will explore the way in which the theology of the family was furthered during the pontificate of John Paul II and how it received a newfound appreciation as the foundational cell for transmitting the faith. The chapter will then examine the recommendations he made in appropriating and promoting the domestic church. Chapter Three will contend that John Paul II laid significant foundations in promoting the mission of

³ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, Apostolic Exhortation, Vatican website, November 22, 1981, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html sec. 86, (hereafter cited as FC).

families. It will argue that his pontificate was instrumental in furthering the conciliar teachings on the family and that further practical measures need to be taken to ensure families are supported to live out their mission as bearers of the faith.

Chapter Four will examine the receptivity of John Paul II's teachings on the family, and how they were applied in the Church. It begins with the argument that if any doctrine or teaching is to have a real impact, there must be a willingness to apply it. Through an exploration of various initiatives, the disparity between doctrine and application will become apparent. It will be argued that there still remains a need to develop further ways to support families in their mission as the domestic church.

Chapter Five is structured into three parts. The first section delves into the current state of theology relating to the family. It begins with an analysis of how a Trinitarian-Christocentric anthropology can support our understanding of the nature and mission of the domestic church. This theological foundation provides the catalyst for determining the indispensable role of the family in the life of the Church. The following sections will examine and critique the current theological standpoint of the domestic church and consider if it has a practical application for families. Throughout this thesis it will be argued that the family has retained a central role in the transmission of the faith and is rightfully entitled the domestic church. It will endeavour to bridge the gap between doctrine and application to ultimately support families in understanding their *raison d'être* as a 'little church.'

CHAPTER ONE

THE SCRIPTURAL AND PATRISTIC CONSENSUS ON THE FAMILY AS DOMESTIC CHURCH

The Church Fathers present a theology that still has great value today because at its heart is the study of Sacred Scripture as a whole.⁴

Since the rediscovery of the term Domestic Church, particularly in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, there has developed a new interest in the nature of the family and its mission in the Universal Church. Although it is a term of modern revival, its roots are to be found much earlier than the twentieth century. The aim of this chapter is to establish the scriptural foundation for the notion of family as a domestic church and discuss the texts of the Church Fathers who developed this term.

The first section will begin with an analysis of the theology of the family in the Old Testament, and the way in which it is presented as the *Covenant Bearer*. The remainder of this section will examine the nature and mission of the family in the Old Testament through a consideration of the distinct roles of each family member and their scriptural basis. The second section will explore the nature and mission of the family in the New Testament, with a particular focus on the family's transformation in Christ, and their role as partakers in the *mystêrion* (Eph 5:32-33). As we study pertinent Pauline texts it becomes clearer that the family is an ecclesial entity. This hermeneutic, favoured by the Church Fathers, will be developed in the subsequent sections. Thus section three will examine the way in which the ecclesial nature and mission of the family was further developed by Saint John Chrysostom, who famously designated the family as a 'little church,' while section four will analyse the texts of Saint Augustine pertaining to the domestic church. The final section of the chapter will discern those characteristics of the family that are common to the Old Testament, New Testament and Church Fathers. Thus it will become apparent that the family is not merely a social construct or series of relationships, but an authentic and necessary part of the greater body that is the Church.

1.1 The Family in the Old Testament: Covenant Bearer

The family is an institution as old as humanity itself. As revealed in the Old Testament, the family is present and active from the beginning of salvation history. Its identity and mission in

⁴ Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church, Vatican Website, September 30, 2010, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html, sec. 37.

the Old Testament foreshadows its identity and mission in the New Testament. The Old Testament presents the family in ecclesial categories, insofar as it transmits faith by bearing the covenant and is constituted by headship and community. In its primordial form the family was endowed with an ecclesial identity and mission and was pivotal to the transmission of the covenant.

1.1.1. Covenant Bearer

God's covenant with Abraham constitutes the family as the central agent for the transmission of the faith from generation to generation:

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Gen 12: 1-3)

This covenant addresses all the families that would proceed from Abraham's lineage, and through it God promises that the family will be the only way by which His covenant will be perpetuated. Future generations would come to know God through their familial connection to Abraham and the covenant. Professor Joseph Atkinson, from the Washington session of the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family, offers a précis of this contention:

The covenant is inextricably bound to the person of Abraham and all who are organically united to him as family. It is grounded in the family of Abraham and can have no other form than a familial one.⁵

For Atkinson, the family is the foundational unit of God's covenant and the necessary medium for its transmission to future generations. In no uncertain terms, Atkinson declares that "without the family there is no covenant."⁶ In other words, God's covenant establishes the family as the *sine qua non* of Israelite religious experience and expression. Its primary mission to bear that covenant takes on an ecclesial significance. It was precisely through the family as the fundamental unit of Israelite society that the covenant was transmitted.

⁵ Joseph Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 129.

⁶ Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 8.

1.1.2. The Nature of the Hebrew Family

In order to better understand the nature of the Hebrew family let us first note the language used to denote what we call the ‘family’. Andrew Dearman, an Old Testament scholar, states “the modern western term *family* does not have an exact *equivalent* in the Old Testament.”⁷ The words commonly used to refer to the family were *beit*, or ‘house’ (Deut 24: 1-3, 10, 25: 9-10), and *mishpehah*, used for extended family, clan, and tribe. Comprising spouses and their offspring, a ‘house’ included individuals united through marriage and the generation of children. For the Hebrew people of the Old Testament, the household was the most important cell within society for “the family always mediates all other experiences of life.”⁸ Each member of the household developed their identity through their relationship to others within the home. Thus, membership of the household safeguarded against an isolated individualism

Despite the emergence of religious cult in temple worship, priesthood, and rabbis, the family was, and continued to be, the primary cell of Israelite prayer and worship. Each parent had a distinctive role to play in the transmission of faith and the conduct of worship.

The role of the father in the religious upbringing of children is manifest in the personages of the patriarchs. The Hebrew father’s role was characteristically priestly. The Book of Genesis records several times that Abraham “built there an altar to the Lord...” (Gn 12:7, Gn 13:18, Gn 22:9). Jacob, in his turn, set up a pillar built of stone and poured oil on it (Gn 28:18 and 35:14). In these distinctively priestly actions, the patriarchs – *fathers* - were responsible for preparing an altar for worship of the Lord. Atkinson highlights that “the head of the family takes upon himself the priestly role of officiant at the sacrifice and offers the sacrificial gift to the Lord on behalf of the whole family unit.”⁹ Significantly, this domestic ritual role presumed no formal ordination or specific command; rather, it was a responsibility inherent in the nature of the father’s own identity, his headship of the family. In this particular role, the father can be regarded as the *priest of the domestic sphere*.

The mother’s role in the religious life of the Hebrew family differed quite significantly to that of the father. Although the religious role of mothers or wives is not explicitly specified in the

⁷ Andrew J. Dearman, “The Family in the Old Testament,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* Volume 52, Issue 2 (1998): 117, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/002096430005200202>.

⁸ Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 5. For further explanation of ‘Corporate Personality’.

⁹ *Ibid*, 100.

Old Testament, there are passages that suggest they did in fact bear responsibilities. Atkinson notes one such task: the “wife’s/mother’s responsibility for ritual purity was essential in securing sanctified sexual relationships.”¹⁰ If a mother persisted in a state of impurity, the holiness of her family, and ultimately her family’s participation in God’s covenant, would be jeopardised. Mothers and wives played an important role in maintaining ritual purity and holiness within the family.

The children also held an important role in the family as heirs to the faith of their ancestors. So as to ensure the faithful transmission of the covenant, it was necessary for children to obediently learn the faith from their parents in order to teach it to future generations. This good was secured through the fourth commandment, instructing children to honour their parents (Ex 20:12 and Deut 5:16). The receptiveness of children, manifested through obedience to parents, was a necessary condition for the transmission of faith in the family. Without the cooperation of the children through filial obedience, the perpetuation of the covenant would have been thwarted. Thus, the children also contributed to the family as covenant bearer.

Father and mother also bore shared responsibilities within the family. Primary among these was religious education. The first chapter of Proverbs identifies both father and mother as educators: “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and reject not your mother’s teaching” (Prov 1:8). Glenn Olsen recognises the significance of this text for daily Israelite family life: “Israel put an accent on the fact that both father and mother are educators of their children.”¹¹ Although mothers and fathers had distinctive roles, they had a shared responsibility. Both parents were responsible for maintaining the environment of the family home, one that was conducive to living out the covenantal relationship with God.

Religious instruction from the father, and the preservation of purity that was fostered by the mother, ensured the transmission of faith and the continuation of the covenant to future generations. In order to safeguard their role in transmitting the faith to their children, God instructed parents to transmit the faith “diligently to your children” (Deut 6:7) and then conversely commanded children to honour their parents (Ex 20:12 and Deut 5:16). These two commands ensured a “mutual obligation of education and respect between parents and

¹⁰ Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 109.

¹¹ Glenn W. Olsen, *Christian Marriage: A Historical Study* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001), 8.

children.”¹² The nature of the Hebrew family resembled a small community of believers, with each member partaking in a significant role in order to bear the covenant to future generations.

1.1.3. The Mission of the Hebrew Family

Further aspects of the Israelite understanding of the religious significance of the family can be gleaned from another text central to Israelite identity, Deut 6:4-9. It concludes with God’s command to Israelite parents, “[A]nd you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deut 6:7). This pericope, known as the *Shema Yisrael*, was the principal confession of the Jewish faith. It is a divine exhortation to parents, entrusting them with the responsibility to teach their children about that which they as a family bear, namely, the covenant. The family was to be a bearer of the covenant, whilst also acting as the primary educator of the covenant. It was primarily within the familial context, and in response to divine decree, that the old covenant was taught and transmitted to children. Thus, it can be said that the mission of the family was to transmit the faith.

In teaching their children about the covenant, Hebrew parents employed a pedagogical principle which can be termed “the teachable moment”.¹³ This pedagogy is illustrated in Ex 12:26-27, where the Lord commands parents: “[A]nd when your children say to you, ‘What do you mean by this service?’ you shall say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s Passover...’” Rather than simply imposing a set of beliefs or, conversely, withholding religious formation in the name of their children’s freedom, parents waited for opportune moments to catechise, thereby making their families hubs of learning. They were to:

[W]ait until children became curious because of some external event in a ritual or due to some artefact they see. When they begin to ask questions about its meaning, the father is then to give the explanation which will take the child deeper into the faith of Israel.¹⁴

Kenneth Gangel makes a similar point:

¹² Olsen, *Christian Marriage*, 7.

¹³ Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 96.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 97.

Hebrew parents were continually to whet the appetites of their children... They were to sharpen their minds, prompting questions which would create teachable moments so that instruction in the faith of Israel might be given.¹⁵

Atkinson and Gangel explain that this Hebraic pedagogy operated through specifically religious and ritualistic opportunities, utilising these moments to provoke children to question their meaning and so come to learn the faith of their ancestors. In short, the pedagogy teaches from the “concrete to the abstract”.¹⁶ It is thereby designed to respond to the child’s naturally attentive gaze at reality,¹⁷ coupled with the filial obedience required by the law (Prov 1:8; Exod. 20:12; and Deut 12:16).¹⁸ To facilitate this process, Atkinson suggests that the “environment of the child should contain ‘icons’ of the faith, material expressions of the covenant both in rituals and in objects...”¹⁹ Through their prayer and worship parents provided the opportunities for their children to learn about their faith. These encounters utilise a pedagogy that personally engages children in the mysteries being taught to them, reflecting a form of mystagogical catechesis.²⁰ Parental utilisation of such mystagogical moments transformed the family into a locus of faith education, thereby ensuring the transmission of the faith to future generations.

By divine decree, parents were responsible for the religious upbringing of their children. Children were expected to obediently receive such instruction, and thus bear the covenant to future generations. The primary mission of the family was to ensure the faithful transmission of the covenant.

1.1.4. The Old Testament Family, Analogous to the Church

By its nature and mission, the Old Testament family manifests an inherently ecclesial trajectory. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* refers to the Church as a “convocation” and

¹⁵ Kenneth O. Gangel, “Toward a Biblical Theology of Marriage and Family,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, Volume 5, Issue 1 (1977): 60, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/009164717700500108>.

¹⁶ Sofia Cavaletti, *The Religious Potential of the Child* Trans: Patricia M. Coulter and Julie M. Coulter (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1992), 192. Although primitive in its origin, such a practice is one that is still used in current teaching practice. Cavaletti, a prominent scholar of the Hebrew Scriptures, noted that children between three to six years of age are fascinated with every new experience they encounter. In observing children, she concluded that their learning is provoked by ‘an attentive gaze at reality.’ Such experiences that incite wonder and raise questions are moments where teaching and learning flourish, particularly in the religious education of children.

¹⁷ Gerard O’Shea, “Sacramentality and Sacraments,” *Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Journal*, ed 29 (2014): 17.

¹⁸ Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 95. Atkinson points out that “the critical importance of this relationship is shown by its inclusion in the Ten Commandments.”

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 97.

²⁰ Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Apostolic Exhortation on the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church’s Life and Mission, Vatican Website, February 22, 2007, http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis.html, sec. 64.

“assembly”.²¹ The term *ecclesia* “designates the assemblies of the people, usually for a religious purpose.”²² Such categories can be applied, or at the very least likened, to the nature of the family in the Old Testament. Evidently, the Israelite family was not just a social unit; it assembled together for religious purposes such as prayer and worship. In this regard, the cultic role of the father within the family can be seen as a prototype of the role of the priest (father) within the parish community or family. Furthermore, in its religious and social dimensions, the Hebrew family was constituted by headship and assembly. In these ways, the nature of the Old Testament family can be understood as analogous to the Church.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* goes on to describe the nature of the Church on earth as “missionary”.²³ Here, another ecclesial trajectory within the Old Testament family emerges. The primary mission of the Hebrew family was to convey the covenant to subsequent generations. The family was, in other words, the primary forum for education in the faith. In its mission of faith formation, the Old Testament family anticipates the mission of the Church.

These findings come as a significant contribution to the Church’s understanding of its own foundation and origins. The recognition of a broader ecclesial trajectory within the People of Israel has been a long-standing component of ecclesiology and is articulated in the *Catechism*:

The remote preparation for this gathering together of the People of God [in the Church] begins when... [God] calls Abraham and promises that he will become the father of a great people. Its immediate preparation begins with Israel's election as the People of God. By this election, Israel is to be the sign of the future gathering of all nations...²⁴

Whilst the Catechism recognises the Church’s origin in the Old Testament, it neglects any mention of the Hebrew family. In light of the family’s role as the bearer of the covenant and the ecclesial trajectory of its nature and mission, the time has come for the covenantal family of the Old Testament to be formally recognised as a locus of preparation for the Church.

²¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed. (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 1997) 751, <http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc.htm>; henceforth abbreviated as CCC.

²² CCC 751.

²³ CCC 850: The origin and purpose of mission. The Lord's missionary mandate is ultimately grounded in the eternal love of the Most Holy Trinity: "The Church on earth is by her nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, she has as her origin the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit." The ultimate purpose of mission is none other than to make men share in the communion between the Father and the Son in their Spirit of love.

²⁴ CCC 762.

For the Hebrew people of the Old Testament, the family was the first place of faith formation, prayer, and participation in the covenant. By its nature and mission, the family of the Old Testament is not only analogous to the Church but also the very place for domestic preparation of the Church. The Hebrew family, as the first herald of the covenant, reveals the significant role that domestic preparation has in terms of transmitting faith.

1.2 The Family in the New Testament: Household Church

The advent of Jesus Christ is of immense significance for the biblical portrayal of the family. Through Christ, the nature and mission of the family in the Old Testament are taken up, transformed, and added to in the New. While “[t]he family still retains its function of being the carrier of the covenant...” and transmitting this faith to future generations, the new covenant in Christ radically transforms this identity.²⁵

1.2.1. The Emergence of the Family in the New Testament Household

From the outset, it is important to note that the New Testament concept of family is not strictly synonymous with that of ancient Hebraic and modern societies. This is the result of both social and Christian influences.

When the Christian Church first left its Semitic cradle, it made its way into a world of Graeco-Roman civilization. Within Early Christian society, the concept of the family had a plurality of meanings. As in Judaism, it can perhaps be most effectively understood under the term “household”,²⁶ and referring to more than mere blood-relations but also “servants and slaves, guests (who were bound to the family by the obligations of hospitality), and sojourners (aliens resident in the household and under its ongoing protection, often employees of the

²⁵ Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 195.

²⁶ Jeremy Punt, ‘Family in the New Testament. Social location, households and “traditional family values,”’ *Online Academic Journal: academia.edu.* (October, 2009): 9, https://www.academia.edu/570701/Family_in_the_New_Testament

Within the New Testament the constituent elements of the family would comprise at least four elements, as indicated also in attempts to translate the New Testament notion of family for our context today, requiring the interchangeable use of words such household (family as socio-political structure), kinship (family as network of natal ties), marriage (family as institution), and interrelations between household members (family as system of relations)... To avoid confusion with the modern-day understanding of family, the household concept is often a more appropriate way to think about familial issues in the first century, and therefore the focus of the following discussion. See also Brenda B. Colijn, “Family in the Bible: A Brief Survey”, *Ashland Theological Journal*, Volume: ATJ 36 (2004) accessed at http://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ashland_theological_journal/36-1_073.pdf, on 12/08/15.

household).”²⁷ This broader meaning of the family as household lies behind the terminology used in the New Testament for ‘family’.

The Graeco-Roman concept of family as household provided a convenient assembly for the early Christians after they were expelled from the synagogues. Whereas the first disciples of Jesus “lived as observant Jews, going to the Temple, the distinctive life of Jesus-follower groups increasingly shifted to private homes.”²⁸ The Book of Acts and the Pauline Epistles indicate the close collaboration of the Apostolic Church and the early Christian household. These texts suggest the close affinity of the early Christian household through their use of distinctively familial terms to describe ecclesial realities.²⁹

The household, which was the central meeting place for Christians, thus began to influence the ecclesial structures at that time. Carolyn Osiek cites several examples where the community members of households were called children.³⁰ She suggests that such an affectionate title by church leaders was “an indication of the familial and especially paternal nature of the authority structures being developed.”³¹ The household, the very meeting place of Christians, was evidently shaping the structure of the Household of God. In fact, Saint Paul instructed bishops and deacons to properly manage their households so as to ensure the proper functioning of the Church. Saint Paul writes: “I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.” (1 Tim 3: 14 – 15) The household, which is the family, is the origin of the household of God, namely the Church.

As a result of religious and social influences, the early Christian community found its point of assembly in the households of baptised Christians. Although these households comprised a variety of individuals, not necessarily blood-related, the ecclesial identity and nature of the Christian household was beginning to emerge.

²⁷ Brenda B Colijn, “Family in the Bible: A Brief Survey,” *Ashland Theological Journal*, Volume: ATJ 36 (2004): 73, http://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/ashland_theological_journal/36-1_073.pdf, on 12/08/15.

²⁸ Punt, “Family in the New Testament. Social location, households and ‘traditional family values,’” 9.

²⁹ Romans 16: 3 – 5, 1 Cor 1:16, 1 Cor 16:19, 1 Tim 3:15, Acts 10: 1 – 2, Acts 11:14, Acts 16:15.

³⁰ Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches*, (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1997), 163. See also 1 John 2:1, 28, 3:7, 4:4.

³¹ Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 163.

1.2.2. The Nature of the Family and the Household

In Christ the spouses become partakers in the divine plan of God, *partakers in the mystêrion* (Eph 5:32-33), that is, they image Christ's union with his bride the Church.³² Their marriage *in the Lord* realizes God's eternal plan on earth, revealed in Jesus Christ.³³ Cardinal Marc Ouellet expands on this Pauline theology of marriage, and provides rich theological insight to this passage:

Their [the spouses] identity is not only that of a couple blessed and called to holiness according to a specific matrimonial modality; their identity is ecclesial in the sense that their relationship itself becomes a sacrament of the objective sacramental relationship between Christ the Bridegroom and his Bride the Church.³⁴

Thus, according to Ouellet, following Saint Paul, the status of a married couple has been elevated through its assimilation to the union of Christ and his Bride, the Church. The marriage of those baptised into Christ participates in, and receives its structure and meaning from Christ's relationship with the Church.

The children that come forth from their union, themselves baptised in Christ, expand and enrich the ecclesial reality established in the one flesh of the spouses. The whole family household, the core of which is the 'nuclear family', but comprising all members related by blood or by some other title, becomes, as it were, a cell and a local touchstone of the great *Ecclesia*. The status of this domestic church is the subject of our investigation.

In Chapter 6 of Ephesians, Saint Paul specifically addresses children. Reminiscent of God's command in the Old Testament he exhorts:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth. (Eph 6:1-3)

³² John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media: 2006) 476.

The Ephesians passage develops a two-fold meaning, both clarifying Christ's bond with the Church and revealing the truth about marriage. Saint Pope John Paul II eloquently expressed this when he stated: 'marriage corresponds to the vocation of Christians only when it mirrors the love that Christ, the Bridegroom, gives to the Church, his Bride, and which the Church seeks to give back in return. This is the redeeming, saving love, the love with which man has been loved by God from eternity in Christ.' (TOB 90:2)

³³ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, footnote 88, 489.

³⁴ Marc Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co: 2006) 195.

In order for families to live out their ecclesial reality, Saint Paul reminds Christians of the necessary mutual cooperation required between parents and children. In his letter to the Ephesians he assimilates nuptial union to the union of Christ and the Church. He urges spouses to pattern their entire lives with reverence of Christ, so as to make of their nuptial union an image of the Church. It is for this reason that Ouellet states:

...the couple is rightly called a domestic Church, *ecclesia domestica*, because it incarnates the nuptial relationship between Christ and the Church. The family is not only an image of this relationship but also its concrete realisation...³⁵

The commission to spouses in Ephesians 5 creates the condition, and indeed is the foundation, of the family that is born of their union. Parents are called to image Christ and the Church, whilst children are commanded to honour their parents. It is when parents and children alike live out their mission, that the Church can be concretely realised in their *ecclesia domestica*.

Atkinson rightly observes that “the philological evidence in the New Testament does not ground the concept of the domestic church. But that is not to say that the reality of the domestic church was not present in the New Testament.”³⁶ As in the Old Testament, so also in the New Testament, the family was the ‘place’ where the fidelity to the covenant was handed on (*paradosis, traditio*) from one generation to the next, and yes, transmitted beyond the family.

1.2.3. The Mission of the Family and the Household

Looking more closely at the significant role that Christian households played a significant role in life of the early Church and its mission of evangelisation. As in the Old Testament, the households of the New Testament were constructed of several people, each endowed with a specific role. At the inception of the Early Christian Church there lacked a social infrastructure, thus “the newly converted Christians used to gather in private houses.”³⁷ Several examples in the Book of Acts, as well as in the Pauline Epistles highlight the way in which the Church began in the households of faithful Christians.³⁸ Salvation entered the lives of the faithful via the local, concrete household. Knieps-Port-le Roi succinctly summarises this stating:

³⁵ Ouellet, *Divine Likeness*, 213.

³⁶ Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 268.

³⁷ Thomas Knieps-Port le Roi, “Being One at Home: Interchurch families as Domestic Church,” *One in Christ* Vol 42, no. 2, (2008): 2, <http://www.oneinchrist.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/INSET-Dec-08-TO-USE.pdf>

³⁸ Romans 16: 3 – 5, 1 Cor 1:16, 19, 1 Tim 3:15, Acts 10: 1 – 2, 11:14, 16:15.

These house churches to which Paul refers to repeatedly in his letters (see 1Cor 16:19, Rom 16:3 – 5, Phil 1-2) served as a building block for the early church at any given location by providing a support base for missionary outreach, a gathering place for worship and prayer and a classroom for catechetical instruction.³⁹

It was within the household that Christians were baptized and entered into the life of Christ. The divine household of God was welcomed in local house churches in the households of the early Christians. Since the dawn of Christianity the household served as a prominent place for the assembly of Christians. Whilst the Old Testament household was united through participation in the Abrahamic covenant, the New Testament household was united through baptism in Christ. “He becomes the *telos* for the family”⁴⁰ and through baptism all members of households are incorporated⁴¹ into the one family of God.

The examples of household worship included thus far lack detail of the nature of actual, blood-related, families. However as Osiek rightly argues, they “do tell us that familial relationships continue to be models for church relationships.”⁴² Households were often the first meeting place for Christians in any locality, the centre for prayer and worship, where they listened to the teaching of the Apostles and evangelists, neophytes were baptized in Christ, and all participated in the ‘breaking of bread’, which certainly never took place in Temple or Synagogue. Prior to the construction of churches, parishes and dioceses, the household was the primary locus for the fostering and dissemination of the Christian faith. Without these family households in those early days, it is difficult to see how the Christian faith might have taken root and grown so quickly and spread so widely.

Scripture presents a long trajectory of the family, initially as the carrier of the covenant and then as a partaker of the *mystêrion*, that is the revelation of Christ and the Church. These scriptural passages attest to the Church’s understanding of the ecclesial foundation of the family. The nature and mission of the household was more than an accidental social construct. It was the central meeting place for Christians, united by their baptism in Christ. The family’s embrace was now enlarged to include all the ‘fellow-householders of the faith’.

³⁹ Knieps-Port le Roi, “Being One at Home,” 2.

⁴⁰ Atkinson, *Biblical and Theological Foundations of the Family*, 219.

⁴¹ See Atkinson, *Biblical and Theological Foundations of the Family*, 239.

Whatever the composition of the family was (i.e., whether or not it included children), it is clear from the text that the conversion and baptism of a principal member of a family affected the rest of that family. It would seem that whenever the head of a family came to faith in Christ, the whole family entered into the faith as well.

⁴² Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 163.

Most importantly, as is evident in both the Old Testament and New Testament, the family operated as a vehicle of revelation and mission. Whereas in the Old Testament families were the bearers of the covenant, in the earliest Church they were commissioned to become the living realities of the New Covenant. Despite the scriptural absence of the specific phrase domestic church, family households operated implicitly as churches in miniature within the greater Church for the transmission and continuation of the faith and thus as important vehicles for carrying out the Lord's command to evangelise the nations. Once we grasp the pivotal role of the family in the early Church, it is only reasonable that it should be treated within ecclesiology as it is a genuine reality in the life of the Church.

1.3 The Family in the Theology of St John Chrysostom

The ecclesial identity and role of the early Christian family, as described in the New Testament, underwent significant development in the theology and preaching of St John Chrysostom. His key discussions of the family are found in his homilies on Ephesians, Genesis, and Colossians. In each, he seeks to articulate the family's nature and mission with particular attention to its ecclesial significance.

1.3.1. The Family as *Micra Ecclesia*

Chrysostom's greatest theological contribution as regards the ecclesiality of the family was his designation of the family as a *micra ecclesia*, or 'little church'. Preaching on St Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, he exhorted his listeners to:

'Instruct your wife, and your whole household will be in order and harmony. Listen to what Paul says. "If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home." (1 Cor. 14:35) If we regulate our households in this way, we will also be fit to oversee the Church, for indeed the household is a little Church [*micra ecclesia*].'⁴³

In designating the family as 'little Church', Chrysostom formulated a hermeneutic akin to 'Covenant Bearer' that guided his entire theology of the family. This theology identifies and explores a fundamental ecclesial relationship between the family and the wider Church. For Chrysostom, the family and the broader Church are co-dependent and mutually edifying manifestations of one ecclesial reality.

⁴³ Catherine P. Roth and David Anderson, *On Marriage and Family Life* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986) 57: Homily 20.

1.3.2. The Nature of the Family as *Micra Ecclesia*

The nature of the family as a little church is grounded in the reality of Christian marriage and confirmed in the generation of children. The family has its root in Holy Baptism, matures in sacramental marriage till it blossoms in children. Inasmuch as Holy Baptism unites every neophyte to Christ the Bridegroom of the Church, so the ‘great mystery’ of sacramental marriage establishes the family as a little church, primarily because it unites the lover and the beloved, and both images and embodies the fruitful union of Christ and the Church.⁴⁴ In *Homily 12* Chrysostom explains this idea, stating that marriage is “an image of the Church... The two have become one. This is not an empty symbol. They have not become the image of anything on earth, but of God himself.”⁴⁵

Reaffirming this claim in *Homily 23* on St Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians, Chrysostom states “The qualities of love are such that the beloved and the lover no longer form two beings, but one... They are not only brought together, but are one...”⁴⁶ This unity of two beings illustrates the analogy between marriage and the union of Christ and the Church. In his analysis of this homily Paul Evdokimov adds “when husband and wife are united in marriage, they are no longer seen as something earthly, but as the image of God Himself.”⁴⁷ In light of Chrysostom’s homily Evdokimov eloquently describes the espoused couple as a ‘living icon of God.’ Such an iconic union establishes an ecclesial dimension in the marital relationship. Sacramental marriage, made ‘mysterical’ through Baptism, becomes therefore the foundation of the little church of the family.

While sacramental marriage is the foundation of the family, the generation of children and their incorporation into Christ brings this union to its fullest flowering. Regarding the union of Adam and Eve, and indeed all nuptial unions, Chrysostom writes that God “reunited these two into one, so that their children would be produced from a single source.”⁴⁸ When the two become one the espoused couple become a fount of new life, which Chrysostom eloquently expresses:

⁴⁴ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, 475 - 477.

Refer to TOB 90:1 – 90:4 for a detailed analysis of this analogy of marriage and Christ and the Church.

⁴⁵ Roth and Anderson, *On Marriage and Family Life*, 75: Chrysostom, Homily 12.

⁴⁶ Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love* (Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985) 117.

⁴⁷ *Ibid* 118.

⁴⁸ Roth and Anderson, *On Marriage and Family Life*, 75: Chrysostom, Homily 12.

The child is a bridge connecting mother to father, so the three become one flesh... Just as the head and the rest of the body are one, since the neck connects but does not divide them, so it is with the child.⁴⁹

It is no longer two, but three, that become one flesh and one family. The husband and wife, the living icon of God, find their new identity when they are ‘three-in-one’, imaging the Trinity.⁵⁰ Acknowledging the fact that some are unable to bear children, Chrysostom argues this does not disqualify them from being a family since “intercourse effects the joining of their bodies, and they are made one...”⁵¹ Bodily union and procreation, in the context of a sacramental marriage, constitute the nature of the family.

Carlo Caffara, in his essay *The Ecclesial Identity and Mission of the Family* (1985), asks, “How precisely does the husband-wife community get transformed into a family community?” Seemingly reflecting Chrysostom’s thought he simply states, “the answer is the child.”⁵² It is the act of procreation that expands the sacramental union into an ecclesial community. Thus, the marriage that is taken up into Christ and the family born of the union, images the fruitful espousals of the Church and is accordingly endowed with an ecclesial identity and ecclesial functions.

1.3.3. The Mission of the Family as Micra Ecclesia

Due to its composition and nature, Chrysostom endowed the family with an ecclesial identity. Yet the mission of the family, which is manifested in the relationship between parents and children, provides further insight to its ecclesial reality.

Entitling the home as *little church*, Chrysostom argues that the household, constituted by baptised Christians, resembles the Church particularly when praying, worshiping and reading the scriptures together. He thus suggests practical ways in which mothers and fathers can fulfil their mission:

On returning home [from Church], let us prepare two tables, one for food and one for the Word of God, whereupon the man should repeat the things that were said in Church. Let the wife learn and the children hear; nor should the servants be

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ As with all analogies, the differences are greater than the similarities. However, the image of three united as one, in the form of a family, is certainly a fitting analogy of the Trinitarian God.

⁵¹ Roth and Anderson, *On Marriage and Family Life*, 75: Chrysostom, Homily 12.

⁵² Carlo Caffara, “The Ecclesial Identity and Mission of the Family,” *Family Today and Tomorrow*. (Braintree: MA, 1985)

deprived of this reading. Make of your home a church, because you are accountable for the salvation of your children and servants.⁵³

Atkinson notes that this passage does not automatically designate a family as a domestic church merely because of baptismal status. Rather, “the home becomes a domestic church to the degree that the husband and wife bring the activities normally associated with the Church into their domestic sphere.”⁵⁴ There is a significant onus on parents, necessitating their active involvement in cultivating a domestic church. Chrysostom explicitly commissions parents to the task of developing ecclesial traits in their homes. Insofar as the parents bring church activities into the home, such as teaching and reading the scriptures, they conform “their home to its true ecclesial nature in Christ.”⁵⁵ It is only when parents actively transform their household into places of worship, teaching and reading scriptures together, that they establish a little church. Reiterating the educative role of parents in *Homily 21*, Chrysostom instructs parents that:

It is necessary for everyone to know Scriptural teachings, and this is especially true for children... We are so concerned about our children’s schooling; if only we were equally zealous in bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord... Let us give them a pattern to imitate; from their earliest years let us teach them to study the Bible.⁵⁶

Scripture must have a prominent place in the home, for it is the means of transmitting the faith. Chrysostom encourages scriptural reading, exhorting families to “make your home into a church. For where we find psalmody, prayer, and the inspired songs of the prophets, there is certainly no mistake in calling such a gathering a church.”⁵⁷ Along with family prayer, it is the reading of Scripture that characterises the household as a church. Reminiscent of the role of parents in the Old Testament, Chrysostom’s homiletics remind parents of their duty as baptised Christians; to provide religious education for their children, thus making their homes a little church, for the sake of perpetuating the faith.

Children are also instructed to contribute to the educative mission of the family. In *Homily 21* on Ephesians 6: 1 – 4, referring to St Paul’s exhortation to “honour your father and your mother

⁵³ Chrysostom, In Genesium, Sermo 7 (PG 54:607), quoted in Marc Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Towards a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, Footnote 10, 41.

⁵⁴ Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 283.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 284.

⁵⁶ Roth and Anderson, *On Marriage and Family Life*, 67: Chrysostom, Homily 21.

⁵⁷ Chrysostom, Exp. In Ps 41:2. PG 55, p158, quoted in Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, footnote 11, 41.

that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth,” (Eph 6:1 – 3) Chrysostom writes:

Notice that the other commandments, such as “Thou shalt not kill” or “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” have no reward attached to them... but the commandment to honour our parents concerns something good, so a reward is promised for those who keep it.⁵⁸

He instructs children to honour their parents for it delivers a reward. This familial cooperation is no mere suggestion, for Chrysostom reminds families that the management of the Church depends on the regulation of their household, “If we regulate our households in this way, we will also be fit to oversee the Church, for indeed the household is a little Church.”⁵⁹ Mutual cooperation and filial obedience echo the management of the Church. In this sense, there is a two-fold reward when children honour their parents; there is a reward in the management of the home and another in the Church. Insofar as the children obey the teaching of their parents, their household resembles the Church. The mission of the family, analogous to the Church, is to transmit the faith to its children through prayer, worship, and Scriptural reading.

Chrysostom’s homilies contribute to the Church’s understanding of the family as an ecclesial entity. The nature of the family, which is united in the bond of matrimony, resembles Christ and the Church and is thus a living icon of God. Reinforced with the procreation of children, the family continues to image the Church in the domestic sphere.

The mission of the family is dependent on the parents, who are to make of their homes a *little church*. It ought to serve as the foundational place for prayer and the reading of Scripture, which must be obediently received by the children, in order to implement the proper management of the Church.⁶⁰ Thus the Church rests, and is dependent, upon the foundational structure that is the family. It is for this reason that the family ought to be supported in their mission as bearers of the Covenant.

Chrysostom’s sermons provide a wealth of material to indicate reasonable grounds for suggesting an ecclesial status for the family. By its nature the family is a living image of God and through its mission its members, as transmitters of the faith, participate in the mission of the Church. As the Church springs forth from the unitive love between the persons of the Holy

⁵⁸ Roth and Anderson, *On Marriage and Family Life*, 66: Chrysostom, Homily 21.

⁵⁹ Roth and Anderson, *On Marriage and Family Life*, 57: Chrysostom, Homily 20.

⁶⁰ Roth and Anderson, *On Marriage and Family Life*, 57: Chrysostom, Homily 20: “If we regulate our households in this way, we will also be fit to oversee the Church...”

Trinity, so too does the *micra ecclesia* spring forth from the unitive love of married spouses. Chrysostom provides a wealth of instructions that situates the family in a prominent place within the Church. Thus it is necessary to develop a theology of the family, which recognises its foundational position in the ecclesial structure of the Church.

1.4. St. Augustine's designation of the family as *Ecclesia Domestica*

Although it is a term of recent popularity, the literal term *domestica ecclesia*, or domestic church, first appeared in the writings of Saint Augustine. His writings allow us a glimpse into his understanding of the family particularly through his interpretation of the family as the domestic church, and of the father as playing an episcopal role.

1.4.1. The Family as the *Domestica Ecclesia*

The text that identifies the family as the domestic church is found in Augustine's letter to the widow Julia, entitled *De Bono Viduitatis*. This was the primary text cited at Vatican II in the discussions pertaining to the family. Augustine writes:

Then, I beseech you earnestly through Him from Whom you have received this gift, and hope for the reward of this gift, that you shall remember to include me in your prayers with all your domestic church.⁶¹

Augustine intentionally used that phrase. He did not designate her family simply as a family; rather, he addressed them as a domestic church. In other words, he designated the family as an ecclesial reality. Perhaps it was the fact that her family was a faith-centred community, congregating for shared family prayer, which prompted Augustine's identification of Julia's home as a domestic church. Reminiscent of Chrysostom, Augustine recognises familial prayer as one of the qualities that characterise the family as a church in the domestic sphere.

The original Latin text reads *domestica ecclesia*, which does not imply a house church. Rather, as Atkinson explains, the word *domestica* is used as an adjective modifying *ecclesia*, thus meaning home church and not the church that meets in the home.⁶² This is a rather significant point, requiring further elaboration. A critical clarification for this topic is that suggesting an ecclesial status for the family need not imply a return to church worship in the homes of Christians, as was done in the era of the Early Church. Rather, what is central to this topic is

⁶¹ Saint Augustine, "De Bono Viduitatis," quoted in Atkinson, *Biblical Foundations for the Theology of the Family*, 271.

⁶² Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 217.

the understanding that the family is the foundational cell upon which the Church proceeds. Indeed, the family is a miniature church in the domestic sphere.

1.4.2. The Nature and Mission of the *Domestica Ecclesia*

The family, according to Augustine, exhibits characteristics of ecclesial structures. Atkinson argues that it is vital for ecclesial structures to be found in the family “because only if such structures can be found operating within the family can the Christian family be legitimately called a ‘church.’”⁶³ The most significant work of Augustine that highlights the ecclesial roles within the family is his commentary on the Gospel of John. Atkinson notes that in this commentary “Augustine speaks to the fathers in the congregation”⁶⁴ defining their role by comparison to the duty of a bishop. Augustine writes:

When, therefore, brothers, you hear the Lord saying: “Where I am, there will my minister be also,” do not think of good bishops and clergy only. You also serve Christ in your own manner by living well, giving alms, preaching/proclaiming His name and doctrine as you are capable, so that every father of a family will, in this Name, acknowledge the paternal affection he owes to his family. On behalf of Christ and for eternal life, let him admonish, teach, exhort, rebuke, use benevolence, and exercise discipline for all who belong to him. In this fashion, in his own home, he will fulfil the ecclesial office and in certain sense the episcopal, ministering to Christ so that he may be with Him in eternity.⁶⁵

Augustine designates several episcopal roles to fathers, exhorting them to assume a position of an episcopal nature in their homes. Atkinson summarises this exhortation quite eloquently when he writes “the father is now a bishop-like representative responsible for the spiritual welfare of his family and acting, as such, out of his faith in Christ.”⁶⁶ By nature, the father fulfils an episcopal role in the family, including the responsibilities for teaching his family and ministering to Christ.

The episcopal role of fathers is reiterated in Augustine’s *Sermon 96*:

Do our job/office in your homes. A bishop is so called because he supervises, because he has to watch over those in his care. So everyone of you in his own house, if he is the head of the household, the function of bishop ought to apply to

⁶³ Ibid. 273.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 273.

⁶⁵ Augustine, “In Joannis Evangelium,” quoted in Atkinson, *Biblical and Theological Foundations of the Family*, 274.

⁶⁶ Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 275.

him, how his people believe, seeing none of them drift into heresy... keep a very watchful eye over the welfare and salvation of all your household.⁶⁷

In this sermon, based on the Parable of Talents, Augustine reminds fathers of the role bestowed upon them by God, urging them to assume their episcopal role in the domestic sphere. The role and mission of the father is determined primarily by his nature. As father of the household he is commissioned to serve as the episcopal figure in the domestic church. This characterisation further enhances the ecclesial character of the family.

Augustine also details the important role that a mother has in the family. In his correspondence with the widow Julia, Augustine shows high esteem for the great devotion of her household, this is due to her concern for her family's faith. Prompted by his praise of her faith, Julia wrote of her fidelity to her role as a mother stating, "all our family follow the Catholic faith to such an extent that never at any time has it fallen into heresy."⁶⁸ In reply Augustine commends the woman in her plight of maintaining a holy and faithful home, writing: "For we consider your home as not a small Church of Christ."⁶⁹ Julia's family is extolled by Augustine and likened to the Church because it is enlivened by faith. One of the four marks of the Church is that she is *holy*,⁷⁰ thus when the family operates within this characteristic of faith and holiness, it too resembles the Church. Thus, in their own way, mothers also contributed to the ecclesial character of their families.

The role of children in the domestic church was not specifically addressed by Augustine. However, in *Epistolae nuper in lucem prolatae* he does speak of fruitfulness and increasing the household:

I have known how much you love Christ, even because your whole household is His family just as the apostle speaks of the domestic church [*domestica ecclesia*]. [I know] how much you wish the things of your house to belong to Christ and to be fruitful and increase.⁷¹

What characterises the family as a church is the desire for its members to belong to Christ and to see him increase. According to Augustine, the family is a domestic church insofar as its

⁶⁷ Augustine, "Sermon 94," quoted in Atkinson, *Biblical and Theological Foundations of the Family*, 275.

⁶⁸ Augustine, "Letter 188 to Lady Julia," quoted in Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 272.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ CCC 811: This is the sole Church of Christ, which in the Creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic."

⁷¹ Augustine, "Epistolae nuper in lucem prolatae," quoted in Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 272.

members belong to Christ and are concerned with the increase and growth of the Christian body, his Church. Although the term *child is* unspecified, it is implicit that fruitfulness is what constitutes the members of the family as the domestic church.

In order that the family can legitimately be recognised as a “church” Atkinson reminds readers that it is first necessary for ecclesial structures to be found “operating within the family.”⁷² The commentaries of Augustine indicate that the family can be legitimately called a domestic church, for by its nature, it is organised in such a way that it constitutes a church in the domestic sphere. The father assumes an episcopal function for the welfare and salvation of his household, the mother assumes a significant role for the purpose of maintaining prayer and holiness, while the children become the expression of fruitfulness and growth of the body of Christ.

Although Augustine did not go so far as to fashion a comprehensive theology of the family, his writings undoubtedly provide a foundation for further theological development. His contributions provide the Church with a firm foundation for suggesting the family has an ecclesial status, thus deserving a place within ecclesiology.

1.5 The Scriptural and Patristic Consensus of the Family as a Domestic Church

The family has always had a part in the salvific mission of God’s people, whether in Israel or the Church. Nevertheless, in Christ, the family, like the whole order of salvation, is transformed. With this in mind, this final section will summarise the scriptural and patristic consensus on the family as the domestic church.

1.5.1. Consensus on the Nature of the Family

From the Old Testament to the writings of Saint Augustine, there was a convergent pattern of thinking on the nature of the devout family household. The household of the Old Testament was like a small community of Israel, with each member designated a significant role in order to bear the covenant to future generations. The father was characteristically priestly, whilst the mother of the family was also responsible for the holiness and purity of her home.⁷³ The children were commanded to honour their mother and father in filial obedience, thus ensuring that faith was transmitted to them from their parents. The small community of believers, with

⁷² Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 273.

⁷³ Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 109.

each member responsible for bearing the covenant, is what characterised the nature of the Hebrew household.

Something of the same sensibility continues in the New Testament, but elevated into the Mystery of Christ. The family household was an assembly place for early Christians, a “gathering place for worship and prayer, and a classroom for catechetical instruction.”⁷⁴ Although the household retained its character as a community of believers, there was an added dimension in light of redemption. No longer was the family anticipating redemption; rather, through Baptism and sacramental marriage, it was now a partaker in the mystery of Christ and the Church. Through redemption, the character of the family was transformed and reoriented around Christ. The family now became a means for participation in Christ and the Church.⁷⁵

This new understanding of the family continued to develop in the Patristic period. Chrysostom recognised this transformed nature and thus designated the family a *little church*. In his eyes, the family was a distinct unit, with children “a bridge connecting mother to father, so the three become one flesh...”⁷⁶ In its relational unity, the family was not “the image of anything on earth, but of God himself.”⁷⁷ Specifically, Chrysostom emphasises that in the new order of redemption the family images Christ and his inseparable union with the Church. For Chrysostom, the family was by nature a christocentric, sacramental, living image of the Church.

Augustine places special emphasis on certain ecclesial aspects pertaining to the family. He saw fathers as fulfilling a properly episcopal role, a comparison not dissimilar to the priestly role of fathers in Old Testament families. Augustine attributes an equally significant role to mothers. Commending Julia on her fidelity and prayer, he designates her home a “Church of Christ”⁷⁸. For Augustine, the mother/wife of the household was responsible for encouraging and maintaining holiness in the home. Here again a similarity with the role of Old Testament mothers becomes apparent. Grounded in the continuity of the roles of mothers and fathers in their families, Augustine affirms a clear continuity of family identity across both old and new covenants.

⁷⁴ Knieps-Port le Roi, “Being One at Home,” 2.

⁷⁵ Eph 5:21–33

⁷⁶ Roth and Anderson, *On Marriage and Family Life*, 76: Chrysostom, Homily 12.

⁷⁷ *Ibid* 75.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 75.

The theological constant that undergirds the nature of the family in the Scriptures and Fathers is its identity as a community of believers. This is particularly evident in the continuity of parental responsibility in the household for the sake of the covenant. Whilst that covenant was transformed in Christ, families and households were still constituted with a view to safeguarding and transmitting the covenant to future generations. Both the Scriptures and Fathers affirm that the family is by nature a transformed covenant bearer, a truly domestic church.

1.5.2. Consensus on the Mission of the Family

The preceding survey of the family's theological trajectory through Scripture and the Fathers also manifests an underlying continuity in the family's mission. The family's continuous mission is to be the foundational unit of covenant transmission and evangelisation.

In the Old Testament the primary mission of the family was to bear the covenant. Commissioned to act as the central agents for the transmission of faith, parents were considered the primary educators of their children (cf. Deut 6:7). The mission of the family was to teach children about the Lord, to transmit the covenant to subsequent generations. Consequently, the household was a place of instruction, prayer, and worship for the continuation of the covenant.

The family retained its educative mission in the New Testament. Several scriptural texts highlight the way in which the Church began in the households of faithful Christians.⁷⁹ Households provided places for gatherings, worship, prayer, and catechetical instruction.⁸⁰ Prayer, worship, scripture, and instruction were characteristics of the family's mission in the New Testament. Like those of the Old Testament, New Testament families were charged with the mission of bearing the covenant and transmitting faith.

St John Chrysostom attributes the same mission to the family, expressing it in terms of the parental duty to make the home a church.⁸¹ He argued that the home ought to be a place that resembles the Church, specifically through the reading of scripture and studying the Bible.⁸² Chrysostom reiterated the importance of prayer and scripture, stating "where we find psalmody, prayer, and the inspired songs of the prophets, there is certainly no mistake in calling

⁷⁹ Romans 16: 3 – 5, 1 Cor 1:16, 19, 1 Tim 3:15, Acts 10: 1 – 2, 11:14, 16:15.

⁸⁰ Knieps-Port le Roi, "Being One at Home," 2.

⁸¹ Chrysostom, In Genesium, Sermo 7 (PG 54:607), quoted in Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Towards a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, Footnote 10, 41.

⁸² Roth and Anderson, *On Marriage and Family Life*, 67: Chrysostom, Homily 21.

such a gathering a church.”⁸³ For Chrysostom, the family’s mission was its own salvation and the salvation of all, a mission achieved principally through reading of scripture, prayer and worship.⁸⁴

In conformity with his focus on the family as an ecclesial community, Augustine held that fathers were to “admonish and teach all who belong to him... ministering to Christ so that he may be with him in eternity”⁸⁵ whilst mothers were to enliven their homes with prayer, ensuring they belong to Christ, be fruitful and increase.⁸⁶ Augustine recognised the salvific mission of parents who, like the parents of the Old Testament, were concerned with the transmission of faith to their children.

The theological constant pertaining to the mission of the family in the Scriptures and Fathers is its responsibility to transmit the faith. In the first covenant, the family retained a central role in transmitting and safeguarding that covenant. With the dawn of the New Covenant in Christ, the family operated as a church in the domestic sphere, thereby receiving the title of *micra ecclesia* or *domestica ecclesia*. The family has without doubt held a central and fundamental place in the transmission of faith throughout salvation history.

1.5.3. The Ecclesiality of the Family

The above survey of the nature and mission of the family from the Old Testament through to Augustine reveals the baptised family’s resemblance of the Church as its primary identifying characteristic.

The parental roles, particularly evident in the father figure who had a priest-like character, prefigure the role of priests. In the New Testament, and after the emergence of episcopacy, parents still retained ecclesial roles in the family, providing places of worship, prayer, and catechetical instruction. Partaking in the *mystêrion* families became living icons of Christ and the Church in the domestic sphere. With children bridging the union of husband and wife, the family resembled and participated in the communion of the Trinity. As Ouellet succinctly

⁸³ Chrysostom, Exp. In Ps 41:2. PG 55, p 158, quoted in Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, footnote 11, 41.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Augustine, In Joannis Evangelium, quoted in Atkinson, *Biblical and Theological Foundations of the Family*, 274.

⁸⁶ Augustine Epistolae nuper in lucem prolatae, quoted in Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 272.

states, “participation in the communion of the Trinity is without doubt the ultimate foundation of the family understood as an ecclesial reality.”⁸⁷

The mission of the family, specifically to transmit the faith and bear the covenant to subsequent generations, characterises its ecclesiality. It was within the family that the covenant was transmitted in the Old Testament, and in the New Testament it still retained that same mission of bearing the new covenant. Parents were commissioned to be heralds of the scriptures to their children, whilst also being responsible for providing catechetical instruction.

“Without the family there is no Covenant.”⁸⁸ From its origin in the Old Testament, the family was primarily responsible for transmitting the covenant. Once that covenant was fulfilled in Christ there remained a continuity of mission, whereby the family household provided the foundational assembly place for the Church. The Church flourished from the hub of family, and from the household people became incorporated into the household of God, the Church. Substantiated by the Fathers, it is reasonable to argue that the family is an organic reality in the Church, or rather the foundational cell of the Church, and thus an ecclesial reality. In its long trajectory the family has undertaken a great mission in the Church, namely as the Covenant Bearer, and thus should be supported in this plight.

⁸⁷ Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, 176.

⁸⁸ Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 8.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RESSOURCEMENT OF THE DOMESTIC CHURCH AT THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

*Therefore, following the example of the Fathers, we can call the Christian family a miniscule church expressing the mystery of the unity of Christ with the Church.*⁸⁹

During the post-patristic centuries, the family lost currency as a focus of theological reflection. In her research on the topic of the domestic church, Florence Caffrey Bourg notes that apart from a few exceptions, “Catholics never recovered the concept of the domestic church lost after the patristic period.”⁹⁰ The emergence of the *Ressourcement* movement, however, sparked a new awareness of the term ahead of the Second Vatican Council. The key figure in this theological revival was Bishop Pietro Fiordelli. His contributions were pivotal for the reintroduction of this patristic idea into Catholic theology. Thanks to his interventions, the Second Vatican Council reintroduced the term domestic church to the Church’s theological consciousness. The aims of this chapter are to examine, firstly, how the idea of domestic church was recovered, and secondly, how this recovery enabled a renewal in the ecclesial importance of the family. It will survey Bishop Fiordelli’s written and spoken contributions to the Council Fathers on the topic of marriage and family. His role in the *Ressourcement* of the patristic term domestic church will be explored, as well as the challenges he experienced in reintroducing this ancient concept.

2.1 The Role of Bishop Pietro Fiordelli in the *Ressourcement* of the Family

Pietro Fiordelli, Bishop of Prato, Italy, was an ardent supporter of the sacramentality of marriage and an advocate of pastoral care for the family. These concerns were manifested in his first pastoral letter as bishop, *Questo sacramento é grande* (This sacrament is great, 1955). There, he discussed the “sublime dignity of Christian marriage and of nuptial love.”⁹¹ The following year he founded diocesan marriage preparation courses.⁹² His deep convictions about

⁸⁹ Michael A. Fahey, “The Christian Family as Domestic Church,” *Concilium* 4 (1995) 87 This quote comes from the written submission of Bishop Pietro Fiordelli at the proceedings of Vatican II.

⁹⁰ Florence Caffrey Bourg, “Domestic Church: A Survey of the Literature,” *The International Academy for Marital Spirituality in INTAMS Review* 7 (2001) 25,

https://poj.peeters-leuven.be/content.php?url=article&id=2004516&journal_code=INT&download=yes

⁹¹ Basilio Petra, “Bishop Pietro Fiordelli (1916 – 2004) at the Council: The Bishop of Prato and the strange origin of the Theology of the Family as a “Domestic Church,” *INTAMS Review* 19 (2013): 14, https://www.academia.edu/36138855/Bishop_Pietro_Fiordelli_1916_2004_at_the_Council_The_Bishop_of_Pra_to_and_the_Strange_Origin_of_the_Theology_of_the_Family_as_a_Domestic_Church

⁹² Petra, “Bishop Pietro Fiordelli (1916 – 2004) at the Council,” 14.

Christian marriage became even clearer when he radically opposed the civil marriage of a Catholic couple in his diocese. Despite being baptised Catholics, the bride, a member of Catholic Action, and the groom, a member of the Communist party, decided to marry in a registry office rather than in a church. Fiordelli's reaction to this civil marriage prompted him to release a diocesan notification in which he totally refuted the civil union, calling it "scandalous concubinage" and a "gesture of open and contemptuous rejection of religion."⁹³ Despite becoming the subject of legal action, and receiving a monetary fine, Fiordelli persevered in his support for Christian marriage. Bishop Fiordelli, appointed in 1954, was already demonstrating his ardent support of Holy Matrimony and the role of the family, prior to its revival at the Second Vatican Council.

2.1.1. Fiordelli's First Intervention

In preparation for the Second Vatican Council, the bishops of the Church were requested to submit a letter outlining their personal proposals for the Council's agenda. Bishop Fiordelli's letter suggested a discussion of the holiness of matrimony and its place in the Church.⁹⁴ Then, in his intervention on the schema *De ecclesia*, which was to eventually become the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, he addressed the ecclesial value of marriage, declaring:

...it regretfully seems, in my humble opinion, that in all of the documents nothing is to be found by way of a special chapter which concerns another state in the Church, which is of the greatest nobility and sanctity and of the greatest fecundity – to the increase of the Mystical Body of Christ – namely the state of sacramental marriage.⁹⁵

At this point in his address, Fiordelli was interrupted by Cardinal B. Alfrink, who argued that Fiordelli's ideas were "outside the realm of this schema."⁹⁶ As a result, Fiordelli was obliged to omit a significant section of his argument. Despite the interruption and omission, Fiordelli did manage to present a conclusion to the fathers:

I submit to the judgement of the conciliar fathers my humble petition, reverently but ardently, that one should begin, as is entirely correct, with chapters on the episcopate, on the priesthood, and on the states of perfection; but then there should be added a very humble and brief chapter that is expressly dedicated to the state of

⁹³ For a full translation of this diocesan notification see Petra, "Bishop Pietro Fiordelli (1916 – 2004) at the Council," 14.

⁹⁴ For a full translation of Fiordelli's preparatory letter see Petra, "Bishop Pietro Fiordelli (1916 – 2004) at the Council", 16.

⁹⁵ For a full translation of Fiordelli's address, as well as the original Latin see, Atkinson, *Biblical and Theological Foundations of the Family*, 305.

⁹⁶ Atkinson, *Biblical and Theological Foundations of the Family*, 305.

Christian matrimony. It is not legitimate to leave indiscriminately among the laity to whom Christ himself has reserved a very special place in the Mystical Body. What I am proposing for the schema is not a mere formality, but is, I believe, a great matter. A light will be kindled in the Church for the promotion of the precious family apostolate. There will also be an ontological basis for determining the relationships between the Church and the family, and between the family and the state, in order to assert the rights of the family...⁹⁷

Fiordelli based his argument on the premise that the elevation of marriage to a sacrament also effects the sanctification of the family. Since, through the sacrament of marriage, the married couple share in the mystical union of Christ and his Church, so too does the family proceed from that holy union: “Christ the Lord, when he elevated marriage to the dignity of a sacrament, directly sanctified this kind of cell [the family] and made it a chosen portion of the Church. He constituted it as a fount of divine grace.”⁹⁸ Since it is founded on, and participates in, the sanctified state of matrimony, the family becomes an extension of the mystery of Christ and the Church.

For the first time since the patristic era, Fiordelli’s intervention introduced the ecclesial status of the family into the Church’s theological consciousness. Fiordelli’s speech was historic and controversial insofar as he was re-evaluating the importance of the family in the life of the Church. The interruption by Alfrink only emphasises this. Despite fraternal opposition, Fiordelli did not cease to advocate for marriage and family at the Council.

2.1.2. Fiordelli’s Second Intervention

In response to his interrupted speech, Fiordelli composed a written intervention to clarify his argument for the ecclesial status of marriage and the family. This second intervention included the ideas that were intended to be read out in his speech to the council fathers. Basilio Petra offers a translation of the omitted section of Fiordelli’s first intervention:

Is the parish the ultimate division of the Church? No. The parish in turn is divided into as many holy cells as there are Christian families, which we can call *miniscule churches*. At their head, by divine precept, stand the bridegroom and the bride, the father and the mother. Saint John Chrysostom said: ‘Make your house a church.’ And Saint Augustine wrote: ‘For we regard your house as not a little church of Christ; and in another passage, ‘with your entire domestic church’. The ultimate division of the Church, or better, the ultimate division composed of the holy cells out of which the Church is constructed, is not the parish, but the Christian family.

⁹⁷ For a full translation of Fiordelli’s concluding statement see Petra, “Bishop Pietro Fiordelli (1916 – 2004) at the Council,” 23.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

And this is so, not because of a constitutive act by the Church, but by the will of Christ himself, who made the institution of the family itself holy and indeed sacramental. Accordingly, the parish can be changed in the course of time, since it belongs to the sphere of ecclesiastical law, but the family can never be changed since it belong to the sphere of divine law. It is not without cause that Saint Paul sees in the mystery of Christian marriage a participation in the mystery of the union of Christ with the Church.⁹⁹

The crux of this section of Fiordelli's first intervention was to further explain his understanding of how the family, an ecclesial entity founded on the sacrament of marriage, constitutes a legitimate division of the Church universal. He summarised this argument in his second intervention, writing:

The diocesan community is further divided, thanks to the constitutive act by the Church, into smaller communities called parishes, headed by parish priests who are equipped with Holy Orders and ordained by the bishop. But the parish community is further divided into smaller communities or cells of the Mystical Body, holy and fertile. These are the Christian families, headed by a husband and wife, a Christian father and mother.¹⁰⁰

In this intervention, Fiordelli suggests that the legitimacy of the family as a division of the universal Church rests on its participation through marriage in the mystical union of Christ and the Church. "We can call the Christian family a miniscule church that possesses an inherent participation in the very mystery of the union between Christ and the Church."¹⁰¹ Through this participation, husband and wife act in the headship of Christ towards their family. Furthermore, the family is constituted a division of the Church not simply by ecclesiastical law, as are dioceses and parishes, but by divine law. For Fiordelli, the family's 'ecclesiality', that is, its ecclesiastical character, is to be understood quite literally.

2.1.3. Fiordelli's Third Intervention

Following his written intervention, Fiordelli had the opportunity to offer a further verbal intervention on *De ecclesia*. He argued with great clarity for the family's recognition as a constitutive element within the Church: "the family should therefore be presented in the schema as the last organ or the last sacred community in the Church..."¹⁰² Lest any Council Father suppose that this was simply Fiordelli's private opinion, the bishop of Prato cited the witness of both Sacred Scripture and the Patristic tradition. "We can and must," he declared to his

⁹⁹ Ibid, 24.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 24.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 24.

¹⁰² Ibid, 26.

fellow bishops, “follow the example of the holy fathers of East and West and call the Christian family a *little church* with an inherent participation in the mystery of unity or love between Christ and the Church.”¹⁰³ For Fiordelli, this point was no minor detail; rather it was the important practical consequence of his recovery of the ecclesiality of the family.

2.1.4. Fiordelli’s Role in the *Ressourcement*

Bishop Fiordelli was instrumental in applying the principle of *Ressourcement* to the family. According to Petra’s survey of the *Acta Synodalia*, Fiordelli was ardent and persistent in his proposals to the council fathers. Although his ideas were not welcomed initially with the same enthusiasm as he had hoped, the idea of the family as a little church has now become part of the Church’s vocabulary. Fiordelli’s written and spoken contributions at the Second Vatican Council, whilst not officially admitted into the schema at that time, still provide the Church with valuable ideas for further development. Fiordelli beautifully expressed the benefits of recognising the family as an extension of the Church when he said:

A light will be kindled in the Church for the promotion of the precious family apostolate. There will also be an ontological basis for determining the relationships between the Church and the family, and between the family and the state, in order to assert the rights of the family...¹⁰⁴

Fiordelli believed that promotion of the family in the understanding of the Church was an indispensable boon in the task of renewing the Church’s own self-understanding. In his concluding statement to the council fathers he went on to declare that “the sanctification of the family will make a very great contribution to the renewal of the Church...”¹⁰⁵ Though his argument in its fullness was excluded from the final draft of the conciliar documents, it retains great value as a source for understanding the importance of the family in the Church, as well as for renewing the Church as a whole.

2.2 Marriage and the Family in the Conciliar Constitutions

Largely through Fiordelli’s own efforts, and despite great opposition, the topic of marriage and the family, and specifically the domestic church, came to be included in the two Apostolic Constitutions most concerned with ecclesiology, *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*. In

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ For a full translation of Fiordelli’s concluding statement see Petra, “Bishop Pietro Fiordelli (1916 – 2004) at the Council,” 23.

¹⁰⁵ Petra, “Bishop Pietro Fiordelli (1916 – 2004) at the Council,” 45.

examining these two conciliar documents, this section will analyse the way in which they contributed to the Church's teachings on the nature and mission of the family.

2.2.1. The Domestic Church in *Lumen Gentium*

The patristic term domestic church was recovered by the Council in the Apostolic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*:

The family is, so to speak, the domestic church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children; they should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care vocation to a sacred state.¹⁰⁶

From the outset, it is evident that this reference to the domestic church is brief and is not expounded or developed with any depth. Additionally, no reference is made to the patristic sources behind the concept. These limitations are indicative of the hesitancy amongst the Council Fathers in recovering the patristic understanding of the family as domestic church.

Nevertheless, *Lumen Gentium* was the first magisterial reference to the family as domestic church, since its use with the Church Fathers. The fact that the reference appears at all is a marvel, and Fahey attributes it to the work of Bishop Fiordelli.¹⁰⁷ As Atkinson rightly argues, this brief inclusion of reference to the family as domestic church was a significant accomplishment, for it began “the process of re-evaluating the place of the family within theology and, by affirming the phrase domestic church, *Lumen Gentium* provided the critical hermeneutic by which the family could be studied.”¹⁰⁸ The revival of the patristic term domestic church, whilst brief, was the necessary starting point for developing a theology of the family.

In addition to its patristic significance, it introduces ecclesial and soteriological dimensions to the Church's broader understanding of the family. Continuing with paragraph eleven, we read: “From the wedlock of Christians there comes the family, in which new citizens of human society are born, who by the grace of the Holy Spirit received in baptism are made children of God, thus perpetuating the people of God through the centuries.”¹⁰⁹ Here, the Council acknowledges that the growth and perpetuation of the Church springs forth from its *ecclesia*

¹⁰⁶ LG, sec. 11.

¹⁰⁷ Fahey, “The Christian Family as Domestic Church,” 90.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ LG, sec. 11.

domestica, which is founded upon the marriage of Christ's faithful. The parents of this familial unit are to be the 'first preachers of the faith to their children...', thus imitating the mission of the Church, but in the domestic sphere.

In the Council's acceptance of the Augustinian teaching that parents are the first catechists of the faith to their children, Atkinson argues that the role of parents can now be seen to "possesses a genuine ecclesial dimension."¹¹⁰ *Lumen Gentium*, while neglecting a deeper explanation of the ecclesial status of the family, is the basis for further theological development. For this reason Atkinson argues that the Council's use of the term is primarily analogical.¹¹¹ The Council did not itself endorse the integration of the family into the ecclesial structure of the Church, a key component of Fiordelli's proposals. Nevertheless, *Lumen Gentium* does provide the basis for the appropriation and further development of the idea in that direction.

In addition to the concept of domestic church present in *Lumen Gentium*, the Constitution indicates that the family also possesses a soteriological dimension when it speaks of the family as the place from which new citizens are born and "who by the grace of the Holy Spirit received in baptism are made children of God, thus perpetuating the people of God through the centuries."¹¹² Parents have a holy duty, that is, to bring forth their children to be baptised and claimed for Christ. As the first educators, parents must understand that "just as they have given natural life to their children, so they must be concerned with their participation in that life which makes them 'sharers of the divine nature' (2 Pet 1:4)."¹¹³ It is parents who are charged with the most important task of bringing forth their children for baptism and a share in the salvific life of Christ. Reflecting on the role of parents as outlined by *Lumen Gentium*, Garcia de Haro writes:

Parents are responsible to have their children come to the fountains of grace; they are not to delay baptism or the other sacraments... The parents are obliged to guide their children in the Faith by their own behaviour, their friendship, their counsels. Because of all this, the family is called the *domestic Church*.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Atkinson, *Biblical and Theological Foundations of the Family*, 313.

¹¹¹ However, at this point in its development, identifying the family as an ecclesial reality is only haltingly made, and the family is called a domestic church only by way of analogy. See Atkinson, *Biblical and Theological Foundations of the Family*, 313.

¹¹² LG, sec. 11.

¹¹³ Ramon Garcia de Haro, *Marriage and the Family in the Documents of the Magisterium*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993) 279.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 281.

This fundamental parental duty, appreciated by the Council, highlights the salvific mission of the family as the milieu where access to, and participation in, the divine life is inaugurated. It is precisely through the family that children gain access to participation in the divine life, firstly through the sacrament of baptism and then through the transmission of faith from their parents.

In its recovery of the term domestic church, however brief, and its reference to the patristic, ecclesial, and soteriological dimensions of the concept, *Lumen Gentium* provides a starting point for further theological reflection, especially in regard to the family's place within the Church.

2.2.2. The Family in *Gaudium et Spes*

Gaudium et Spes has been deemed the document that provides “practical and opportune opening[s] to the truths set forth in *Lumen Gentium*.”¹¹⁵ Fittingly, therefore, Council Fathers continue in *Gaudium et Spes* their reflection on the family begun in *Lumen Gentium*. In particular, paragraph forty-eight expands upon the ecclesial reflections of *Lumen Gentium* and offers further insights on the Christological and sacramental dimensions of the Christian family. A novel contribution of *Gaudium et Spes* to the Council's teaching on the family is the way in which it ascribes a Christological characteristic to marriage:

Christ the Lord abundantly blessed this many-faceted love, welling up as it does from the fountain of divine love and structured as it is on the model of His union with His Church. For as God of old made Himself present to His people through a covenant of love and fidelity, so now the Saviour of men and the Spouse of the Church comes into the lives of married Christians through the sacrament of matrimony. He abides with them thereafter so that just as He loved the Church and handed Himself over on her behalf, the spouses may love each other with perpetual fidelity through mutual self-bestowal.

Authentic married love is caught up into divine love and is governed and enriched by Christ's redeeming power and the saving activity of the Church, so that this love may lead the spouses to God with powerful effect and may aid and strengthen them in sublime office of being a father or a mother.¹¹⁶

As Ouellet points out, this section goes beyond a “juridical conception of marriage,” reconceiving it ‘in terms of an ‘encounter with Christ,’ the Bridegroom of the Church, who ‘abides with’ spouses and gives them a share in his own love.”¹¹⁷ Marriage is therefore

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 216.

¹¹⁶ GS sec. 48.

¹¹⁷ Marc Ouellet, “Marriage and the Family within the Sacramentality of the Church: Challenges and Perspectives,” *Communio: International Catholic Review* 41 (Summer 2014) 231.

Christocentric, for it derives from the fount of Christ's union with his Bride, and is enriched by Christ's redeeming power. Married love is no mere likeness to Christ's nuptial union with the Church; it is a true participation "in the very love of Christ for the Church."¹¹⁸ Given the causal relationship between marriage and the Christian family, the family is also therefore deeply rooted in the person of Jesus Christ.

Having identified the Christological characteristic of marriage and the family, *Gaudium et Spes* goes on to speak of the family *sacramentally*:

The Christian family, which springs from marriage as a reflection of the loving covenant uniting Christ with the Church, and as a participation in that covenant, **will manifest to all men Christ's living presence in the world**, and the genuine nature of the Church. This the family will do by the mutual love of the spouses, by their generous fruitfulness, their solidarity and faithfulness, and by the loving way in which all members of the family assist one another.¹¹⁹

In speaking of the Christian family as 'a living presence' of Christ's divine love, *Gaudium et Spes* is indicating that the family itself possesses a sacramental dimension, springing from the sacramentality of marriage. Reflecting on this section of *Gaudium et Spes*, Ouellet believes the Council is teaching that marriage, and indeed the family, is a "conjugal and familial holiness that concretely reveals and incarnates in the world the true nature of the Church as Bride of Christ."¹²⁰ The "sacramental mission of the family is to mediate Christ's love for the Church..."¹²¹ The family does this by being a visible sign of love between persons, a communion or persons that is united by love. On this basis, Ouellet suggests that the Council fathers see in the family the sacramental reality of the Trinity itself, and "the Trinitarian love for the world."¹²²

He argues that in a sacramental marriage there is an exchange of gifts between Christ and the couple, whereby the baptised couple offer their self-giving in faith, whilst Christ bestows upon them the gift of the Holy Spirit.¹²³ This divine gift "modifies their personal and ecclesial status"¹²⁴ and enables the couple to be fruitful in their married love. Ouellet states that Christ's nuptial Love "dwells in their own love, sanctifying it, purifying it, and making it humanly and

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ GS, sec. 48.

¹²⁰ Ouellet, "Marriage and the Family within the Sacramentality of the Church," 232.

¹²¹ Ouellet, *Divine Likeness*, 67.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ouellet, "Marriage and the Family within the Sacramentality of the Church," 234.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

ecclesially fruitful.”¹²⁵ Thus the family is a fount of holiness, which receives its life from the Church, whilst reciprocating love through the spousal gift of fruitfulness.

In addition to teaching that the family is a living sacrament of Christ’s divine love, *Gaudium et Spes* also develops the Council’s ecclesiological reflections on the family begun in *Lumen Gentium*:

By their very nature, the institution of matrimony itself and conjugal love are ordained for the procreation and education of children, and find in them their ultimate crown. Thus a man and a woman, who by their compact of conjugal love "are no longer two, but one flesh" (Matt. 19:ff), render mutual help and service to each other through an intimate union of their persons and of their actions. Through this union they experience the meaning of their oneness and attain to it with growing perfection day by day. As a mutual gift of two persons, this intimate union and the good of the children impose total fidelity on the spouses and argue for an unbreakable oneness between them.¹²⁶

For centuries, the Nicene Creed professes ‘four marks’ that distinguish the Church as being one, holy, catholic and apostolic.¹²⁷ In this section of paragraph 48 *Gaudium et Spes* indicates that these same marks are also characteristic of marriage and the family. Marriage therefore is an intimate union of two persons, which, when blessed with children, becomes an ‘unbreakable oneness’ in family; thus, it bears the mark of unity. The family is holy, just as the Church is Holy, since it is ‘united with Christ... and sanctified by Him’ through the sacrament of matrimony.¹²⁸ The family is catholic, just as the Church is Catholic. Whilst this mark refers to the Church’s universality, the Catechism also adds “the Church is catholic because Christ is present in her. Where there is Christ Jesus, there is the Catholic Church.”¹²⁹ The sacrament of baptism incorporates family members into the divine life of Christ, thus cultivating the family as a place where “Christ is present.”¹³⁰

Finally, conjugal love is apostolic just as the Church is Apostolic, since it is “ordained for the procreation and education of children.”¹³¹ In their family the martial couple ‘keeps and hands on the teaching’ of the apostles to children. Through transmission of faith from parents to

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ GS, sec. 48.

¹²⁷ CCC 811: "This is the sole Church of Christ, which in the Creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic." These four characteristics, inseparably linked with each other, indicate essential features of the Church and her mission. The Church does not possess them of herself; it is Christ who, through the Holy Spirit, makes his Church one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, and it is he who calls her to realize each of these qualities.

¹²⁸ CCC 824.

¹²⁹ CCC 830.

¹³⁰ CCC 830.

¹³¹ GS, sec. 48.

children the mission the family is apostolic. By its nature, the family bears the four distinguishing characteristics of ecclesiality.

The family, with its Christological, sacramental and ecclesial characteristics, is the foundational building block of the Church. In fact, in *Gaudium et Spes*, we read that it is the work of parents, within the hearth of the family, that paves the way for salvation and sanctity:

As a result, with their parents leading the way by example and family prayer, children and indeed everyone gathered around the family hearth will find a readier path to human maturity, salvation and holiness. Graced with the dignity and office of fatherhood and motherhood, parents will energetically acquit themselves of a duty which devolves primarily on them, namely education and especially religious education.¹³²

In this way, *Gaudium et Spes* indicates that the family has a particular nature and mission within the Church. It is the work of parents – in their example, prayer and religious education – that leads children towards sanctity. Thus, this *communio personarum* which is called the family, can be the most fundamental and essential division within the Church.

The family is the foundation for one's growth in faith and holiness, for it is through the example and education of parents that a child is reared in their relationship with Christ. Yet the family is sacramental, as it is a living expression of Christ's covenant with the Church, and it is ecclesial because it comprises an intrinsic part of the Church. *Gaudium et Spes* teaches:

Thus the Christian family, which springs from marriage as a reflection of the loving covenant uniting Christ with the Church, and as a participation in that covenant, will manifest to all men Christ's living presence in the world, and the genuine nature of the Church. This the family will do by the mutual love of the spouses, by their generous fruitfulness, their solidarity and faithfulness, and by the loving way in which all members of the family assist one another.¹³³

Not only is the family a living image of the love of Christ's union with his bride the Church, but it is also an interpretative key, an image, by which we can better understand the notion of *communio*. The family, the domestic *communio personarum*, is a living sign of fruitfulness, fidelity and unity, thus manifesting the divine presence of God. The family is, so to speak, an image of the divine *communio personarum*.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

In the dogmatic constitutions *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* only few sections are devoted to the nature and mission of the family. Nevertheless, as this study has shown, these references effectively recover the patristic idea of the family as domestic church and provide the scope and foundation for further study and development. The most significant point is that the council fathers were beginning to push the concept of domestic church, as applied to the family, beyond analogy into literal reality.

2.3. The Domestic Church in other Conciliar Documents

Apostolicam Actuositatem, the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, promulgated a year after *Lumen Gentium*, is the only other conciliar document that refers to the domestic church. In encouraging the lay faithful in their particular vocation, and reminding them of their call to evangelisation according to their state of life, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* recognised the family as a particular place in which holiness can be cultivated.

Paragraph eleven begins by identifying the “unique importance [of the family] for the Church and civil society,” since it was established by God in the beginning as “the basis of human society”. It then offers an extensive discussion of the family’s mission:

This mission - **to be the first and vital cell of society - the family has received from God**. It will fulfil this mission if it appears as the *domesticum sanctuarium Ecclesiae* (the domestic sanctuary of the Church) by reason of the mutual affection of its members and the prayer that they offer to God in common, if the whole family makes itself a part of the liturgical worship of the Church, and if it provides active hospitality and promotes justice and other good works for the service of all the brethren in need. Among the various activities of the family apostolate may be enumerated the following: the adoption of abandoned infants, hospitality to strangers, assistance in the operation of schools, helpful advice and material assistance for adolescents, help to engaged couples in preparing themselves better for marriage, catechetical work, support of married couples and families involved in material and moral crises, help for the aged not only by providing them with the necessities of life but also by obtaining for them a fair share of the benefits of an expanding economy.¹³⁴

In this paragraph, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* expands upon the understanding of the family as domestic church initiated by *Lumen Gentium*, and this is indicated by the more extensive description it affords the family as “the domestic sanctuary of the Church”. The key focus of *Apostolicam Actuositatem* regarding the family is to expand upon its mission, suggesting

¹³⁴ Paul VI, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, Vatican Website, November 18, 1965, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html, sec. 11, (hereafter cited as AA).

various ways in which this can be lived. Families are encouraged to work in missionary outreach by providing hospitality, promoting justice, and assisting in schools. Couples are encouraged to apply themselves to learning, as well as teaching others, about marriage. Most important, however, is prayer. The ‘whole family’ is to be ‘a part of the liturgical worship of the Church...’ Prayer and worship form the foundation of the family’s mission in the Church.

In teaching that prayer and worship are to be at the forefront of the family’s mission, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* broadens the analogy of the family to the Church. “The analogy between family and church is no longer based merely on the task of evangelisation, but expands into a number of characteristics in which the family shares in the life of the Church as a whole.”¹³⁵ Although no reference is made to patristic sources in the document or its footnotes, the encouragement to familial prayer and worship revives St John Chrysostom’s instruction to parents to “make your home into a church. For where we find psalmody, prayer, and the inspired songs of the prophets, there is certainly no mistake in calling such a fathering a church.”¹³⁶ As the family fulfils its liturgical, prayerful, and missionary acts it not only resembles the Church but becomes a very participation in, and extension of, the Universal Church.

The Council continued its reflections on the mission of the family in *Gravissimum Educationis* (1965). Although it does not refer to the family as domestic church, it does elaborate upon the role of parents as primary educators of their children, as outlined in *Gaudium et Spes*. This topic is taken up in section three, entitled ‘The Authors of Education.’ By virtue of the sacrament of matrimony and the incorporation of their children into the Church through baptism, parents have an inalienable mission to impart the faith to their children. *Gravissimum Educationis* reminds parents of their obligation transmit the faith within their families:

Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators. This role in education is so important that only with difficulty can it be supplied where it is lacking. Parents are the ones who must create a family atmosphere animated by love and respect for God and man, in which the well-rounded personal and social education of children is fostered. Hence the family is the first school of the social virtues that every society needs. **It is particularly in the Christian family, enriched by the grace and office of the sacrament of matrimony, that children should be taught from their early years**

¹³⁵Knieps-Port le Roi, “Being One at Home,” 5.

¹³⁶ John Chrysostom, *Exp. In Ps 41:2. PG 55*, p158, quoted in Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, footnote 11, 41.

to have a knowledge of God according to the faith received in Baptism, to worship Him, and to love their neighbour. Here, too, they find their first experience of a wholesome human society and of the Church. Finally, it is through the family that they are gradually led to a companionship with their fellowmen and with the people of God. Let parents, then, recognize the inestimable importance a truly Christian family has for the life and progress of God's own people.¹³⁷

De Haro notes that this declaration specifically discusses the rights and duties of parents in the education of their own children.¹³⁸ Whilst *Apostolicam Actuositatem* discusses the centrality of prayer and worship in the domestic sanctuary, *Gravissimum Educationis* stipulates the responsibilities of parents in the transmission of faith. These two documents indicate that even as the Council progressed there was a growing interest in, or at least a reawakening of, the family's importance in the life of the Church.

2.4 The Challenges in Appropriation

While the Second Vatican Council can be applauded for its efforts to recover the patristic understanding of the family as domestic church, simply reintroducing the term is not enough. The major challenge to the complete and coherent appropriation of the concept is summarised by Dr Joseph Atkinson:

With the promulgation of *Lumen Gentium* (1964), this ancient patristic concept of the baptised family was reinserted into the modern theological parlance. However, this reintroduction was done with little or no explanation and, it should be noted, with no developed theological grounding.¹³⁹

Thus, although *Apostolicam Actuositatem* and *Gravissimum Educationis* do elaborate on the role of parents, their appreciation of how the family functions as an organic extension of the Church, and how it is situated within the structure of the Church remains underdeveloped. This brief treatment is understandable in the light of the opposition faced by Bishop Fiordelli, the key proponent of the concept, on the Council floor, as mentioned above.

¹³⁷ Paul VI, *Gravissimum Educationis*, Declaration on Christian Education, Vatican Website, October 28, 1965 http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_gravissimum-educationis_en.html, sec. 3, (hereafter cited as GE).

¹³⁸ Garcia de Haro, *Marriage and the Family in the Documents of the Magisterium*, 280.

¹³⁹ Joseph Atkinson, "Family as Domestic Church: developmental trajectory, legitimacy, and problems of appropriation," *Theological Studies*: 66 (2005) 592.

Perhaps if Fiordelli was afforded the opportunity to complete the presentation of his proposal, the Council would have been better theologically equipped to provide a deeper grounding to its implementation of the term domestic church.

Florence Caffrey Bourg offers further insight into the challenges of appropriation inherent in the Council's treatment of domestic church. In light of her study of literature concerning the family as domestic church, she points to the rather ordinary way in which the concept was described: "It [*ecclesia domestica*] was incorporated in a rather perfunctory reminder for parents to teach the faith to their children and cultivate religious vocations among them. Perhaps because the way *ecclesia domestica* was placed in *Lumen Gentium* did not signal much that was new, most theologians and pastoral authors in the wake of the Council "busied themselves with other concerns."¹⁴⁰ The references to the family as a domestic church were perhaps understood as traditional reminders to parents regarding their role in the transmission of faith to their children. Bourg identifies the manner and language of the Council's reference to domestic church as a significant challenge in appropriating the concept. With only one mention of domestic church in *Lumen Gentium*, and only one section dedicated to the family, it seems that this concept was rather vague and underappreciated in the minds of the Council Fathers.

Yet the patristic teachings of this term detailed the nature and mission of the family, devoting attention to how the domestic church was to operate, and how it was intrinsic to the life of the Church. Chrysostom and Augustine explained the family's *modus operandi* in a way that likened the family to the Church, not merely analogous to the Church, but the very foundation from which the Church grows. The Christian family, as proposed by Fiordelli, is the "ultimate division of the Church... out of which the Church is constructed..."¹⁴¹ Thus the reintroduction of this patristic term in the conciliar documents was a significant revival, yet it did not attract further development in the immediate aftermath of the Council.

Another challenge in appropriating the authentic patristic understanding of the family may have been due to flaws in the Church's theology of vocation before, and at the time of, the Council. For centuries, the pursuit of perfection was sought in monastic life. Atkinson argues that this resulted in an unfortunate and erroneous perception of marriage and family as a "second-class

¹⁴⁰ Bourg, "Domestic Church: A Survey of the Literature," 186.

¹⁴¹ Petra, "Bishop Pietro Fiordelli (1916 – 2004) at the Council," 24.

status within the Church...”¹⁴² Concretely, this misperception prevents the Church from appreciating that marriage and family are effective paths to holiness and means of salvation. Atkinson goes on to suggest that it was this misperception that lay behind the hostility that greeted Fiordelli’s proposals. He explains that, for this reason, Fiordelli exercised caution and was “careful to show that anything positive about the familial state does not thereby denigrate the celibate state.”¹⁴³ This caution and hesitancy is indicative of the attitudes at the time and suggests why the Council may not have appropriated the concept of domestic church in its fullness.

Whilst it seems that the attention given by Vatican II to the topic of family was insufficient, Atkinson reminds us that the reaction to Fiordelli’s suggestions were “understandable even though, around the time of the council, a reevaluation of the nature and role of the family was being explored by a few people...”¹⁴⁴ It must be remembered that these new concepts, pertaining to the family as the domestic church, were “not yet a part of the Church’s consciousness... At this point, the intrinsic relationship between Church and family was not grasped.”¹⁴⁵ So while it seems the Council fathers resisted Fiordelli’s proposals and faltered in their recovery of the patristic theology of the family, perhaps it was mere caution at the reintroduction of an old term from the early church in conciliar documents.

2.5 The Justification of a Patristic Revival of the Family as a Domestic Church

Earlier in this chapter it was explained that the family received little, if any, theological or magisterial attention from the time of Augustine to the Second Vatican Council. The idea of the family as a domestic church was “lost after the patristic period.”¹⁴⁶ Attempting to further understand this absence, Atkinson considers the time it took for the Church to fully understand marriage: “It took the Church about a millennium to define formally the sacramentality of marriage, precisely because it was difficult for theologians to accord a truly spiritual effect to the physical realities of marriage.”¹⁴⁷ Given the foundation of the theology of the family upon marriage, it is unsurprising that the theology of the family had not developed since the Patristic era.

¹⁴² Atkinson, “Family as Domestic Church,” 595.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 594.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Bourg, “Domestic Church: A Survey of the Literature,” 185.

¹⁴⁷ Atkinson, “Family as Domestic Church,” 594.

The Fathers assertively described the family as a domestic church and justified their arguments with reference to Sacred Scripture, wherein families are considered the primary place for transmitting the faith to future generations. Aware of its deep significance, Fiordelli reintroduced this ancient concept to the Church at the Second Vatican Council, hoping that thereby the family would be restored to its rightful place in the Church, the Body of Christ. The inclusion of the phrase in two Constitutions, and the further consideration of the family in *Apostolicam Actuositatem* and *Gravissimum Educationis* suggests that Fiordelli had some success.

Despite scepticism from Council Fathers and a lack of depth in its consideration of the family, the Second Vatican Council accomplished the beginning of “the process of reevaluating the place of the family within theology... *Lumen Gentium* provided the critical hermeneutic by which the family could be studied.”¹⁴⁸ There was, therefore, great merit in reintroducing the concept of the domestic church into conciliar teachings. The theological seed whereby a comprehensive understanding of the family could be reborn in the Church had been planted and the theological vacuum of fifteen hundred years could begin to be addressed. The time has arrived for theologians inspired by the Council’s understanding of the family to challenge the people of the Church to adopt new habits of thinking about families as ecclesial communities.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 597.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DOMESTIC CHURCH IN POST-CONCILIAR DOCTRINE

*The family is not only like the Church, as a reality of grace, the community of the spouses is an organic part of the ecclesial community; it is the Church.*¹⁴⁹

The renewed importance given to the family by the Second Vatican Council was only the beginning of what was to become a central theological and pastoral concern for the post-Conciliar Church. For the young bishop, and later archbishop, Karol Wojtyla, a participant of the Council, the topic of marriage and family became a priority when he succeeded to the Chair of Peter. What seemed to be merely a *seed* in the conciliar documents began to flourish during the pontificate of John Paul II. This chapter will explore the significance of his leadership in the development of the family as a domestic church, and the recommendations he made for successful appropriation of this term in the Church.

The first section will provide a summary of the development of the domestic church in the aftermath of the Council. Specifically, it will explore the way the topic of the family was addressed during the pontificate of Pope Paul VI. Section two will examine the significance of Karol Wojtyla's election to the See of Peter. Focussing on *Familiaris Consortio*, this section will highlight the significance of Pope John Paul II's papacy for the promotion and development of the family as the domestic church. Section three will consider other magisterial documents of Pope John Paul II, paying special attention to how they further elaborated the ideas he initially presented in *Familiaris Consortio*. Taking a more practical focus, section four will consider the various initiatives and projects that were suggested by Pope John Paul II to provide concrete support to families in their mission as domestic churches. The final section of this chapter will explore current concerns and issues pertaining to the nature and mission of the family in the light of John Paul II's immense contribution, and why there still remain issues in appropriating a theology of the family.

3.1 The Nature and Mission of the Family after Vatican II

In the years immediately following the Council, the newly revived term domestic church received little attention. The possible reasons for this oversight are several, though unfortunate:

¹⁴⁹ Paul Evdokimov in Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Towards a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, 178.

perhaps the Church's priorities lay elsewhere; perhaps unpacking such a new and unfamiliar concept was daunting for theologians; perhaps the resistance faced by Bishop Fiordelli on the Council floor persisted into the early post-conciliar period. Consequently, the relative dormancy of the term after the Council makes the few magisterial references to domestic church in those years especially interesting. It is to these that we now turn.

3.1.1. *Humanae Vitae*

The most notable, and indeed controversial, aspect of Pope Paul VI's pontificate was the promulgation of *Humanae Vitae*. In this encyclical, Paul VI addressed 'the regulation of birth', in the context of newly available oral contraceptive drugs.¹⁵⁰ Whilst *Humane Vitae* does not explicitly employ the term domestic church, it certainly reiterates the Second Vatican Council's teaching on marriage and the family, especially in its discussion of the nature of conjugal love and the gift of children.

In his response to the rising use of contraceptives, Paul VI aimed at rearticulating the Council's teaching on marriage and the family. In *Humanae Vitae*'s first paragraph¹⁵¹, he reminds married people of the seriousness of their vocation, by which they ought to "collaborate freely and responsibly with God the Creator."¹⁵² Then, in the section on "Doctrinal Principles," he further explains the manner of this collaboration, reminding spouses that their union is "ordained to the procreation and education of children."¹⁵³ Whilst these phrases do not explicitly employ the term domestic church, they do presume the understanding of the nature and mission of the family developed in Scripture, and by the Fathers of the Church and the Second Vatican Council.

Although *Humanae Vitae* focussed primarily on the problems relating to contraception, its impact on the Catholic understanding of marriage was no less significant. In this vein, Cardinal Angelo Scola argues that this encyclical "in great part polarized the reflection on marriage after the Council."¹⁵⁴ Pope Paul VI defended the inseparability of the procreative and unitive meaning of the conjugal act – thereby implicitly defending the nature and mission of the family

¹⁵⁰ Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, Encyclical Letter of the Regulation of Birth, Vatican Website, July 25, 1968, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html, (hereafter cited as HV).

¹⁵¹ HV, sec. 1.

¹⁵² HV, sec. 1.

¹⁵³ HV, sec. 8.

¹⁵⁴ Angelo Scola, *The Nuptial Mystery* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 203.

– against the threat of contraception. His letter openly reiterated the Church’s teaching on marriage. *Humanae Vitae* therefore appears to be an important, though subtle, step in the gradual development of the post conciliar theology of the family.

3.1.2. Marialis Cultus

Pope Paul VI’s 1974 Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* is another example of the trend towards a renewed focus on the family in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. Indeed, this document seems to contain the first explicit reference to the family as domestic church after the Council. Whilst the primary focus of this Exhortation was liturgical worship of, and devotion to, the Blessed Virgin Mary, it also includes three paragraphs that refer to the family. Its principal focus in this regard is prayer.

Paul VI’s first point in relation to the family is to highlight the centrality of prayer to the family’s identity as domestic church. Drawing directly on the Council’s Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (which taught that the family “shows itself to be the domestic sanctuary of the Church through the mutual affection of its members and the common prayer they offer to God”¹⁵⁵), Paul VI advocates “a concrete effort to reinstate communal prayer in family life.”¹⁵⁶ It is in this context that he refers to the family in its new hermeneutic as the domestic church. He argues that communal prayer is necessary “if there is to be a restoration of the theological concept of the family as the domestic Church.”¹⁵⁷ In this phrase, Paul VI displays a profound understanding of both the essence of the concept domestic church and the Church’s need for a recovery of this concept. For Paul VI, common prayer is essential to the life of the family: without it, “the family would lack its character as a domestic Church.”¹⁵⁸

Remarkable as this reference is, Paul VI does not stop at simply pointing out the importance of prayer to the life of the family as domestic church. In the next paragraph, he suggests practical ways in which families can pray together. Again drawing inspiration from *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, he proposes the Divine Office as the “high point which family prayer can

¹⁵⁵ AA, sec 11.

¹⁵⁶ Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*, Apostolic Exhortation for the right ordering and development of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Vatican Website, February 2, 1974, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19740202_marialis-cultus.html, sec. 52, (hereafter cited as MC).

¹⁵⁷ MC, sec. 52.

¹⁵⁸ MC, sec. 52.

reach,”¹⁵⁹ and the means through which the family is “to be more intimately linked with the Church.”¹⁶⁰ For Paul VI, as for the Second Vatican Council, the Liturgy of the Hours is a concrete means of fostering the ecclesial character of the family. Additionally, Paul VI also recommends the recitation of the Rosary: “[T]here is no doubt that, after the celebration of the Liturgy of the hours... the Rosary should be considered as one of the best and most efficacious prayers in common that the Christian family is invited to recite.”¹⁶¹

Finally, the Pope also offers a word concerning the difficulties of, and barriers to, family prayer. He acknowledges that “the changed conditions of life today do not make family gatherings easy, and that even when such a gathering is possible many circumstances make it difficult to turn it into an occasion of prayer. There is no doubt of the difficulty.”¹⁶² Nevertheless, he offers a strong word of encouragement, reiterating yet again that prayer is essential to the identity and life of the Christian family:

[I]t is characteristic of the Christian in his manner of life not to give in to circumstances but to overcome them, not to succumb but to make an effort. Families which want to live in full measure the vocation and spirituality proper to the Christian family must therefore devote all their energies to overcoming the pressures that hinder family gatherings and prayer in common.¹⁶³

Marialis Cultus indicates that, for Paul VI, prayer together, at home, is of utmost importance to the life of the Christian family.

3.1.3. Evangelii Nuntiandi

A third example of Pope Paul VI’s concern for the family appears in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. In this exhortation on Evangelisation in the Modern World, released only a year after *Marialis Cultus*, the Pope devotes a paragraph to the family.

Indicating his appreciation for the Council, Paul VI begins by summarising the nature of the family as domestic church: “At different moments in the Church’s history and also in the Second Vatican Council, the family has well deserved the beautiful name of ‘domestic church’. This means that there should be found in every Christian family various aspects of the entire

¹⁵⁹ MC, sec. 54.

¹⁶⁰ MC, sec 53: “It is fitting...that the family, as a domestic sanctuary of the Church, should not only offer prayers to God in common, but also, according to circumstances, should recite parts of the Liturgy of the Hours, in order to be more intimately linked with the Church.”

¹⁶¹ MC, sec. 54.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

Church.”¹⁶⁴ This principle also applies to the mission of the family: “[T]he family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates.”¹⁶⁵ Families ought to operate in a manner that resembles the Church.

For Paul VI, the evangelical character of the family’s mission has both an internal and external focus. On the one hand, “[i]n a family which is conscious of... [its] mission, all the members evangelise and are evangelised. The parents not only communicate the Gospel to their children, but from their children they can themselves receive the same Gospel as deeply lived by them.”¹⁶⁶ Parental responsibility for the education of children forms a key component of the family’s internal evangelisation. On the other hand, a family conscious of its mission of evangelisation “becomes the evangeliser of many other families, and of the neighbourhood of which it forms part.”¹⁶⁷ In its internal and external focus, the family’s mission of evangelisation resembles that of the Church.

The three documents just surveyed indicate Pope Paul VI’s interest in the patristic idea of the family as domestic church, revived by the Second Vatican Council. Whilst Paul VI’s teaching does not represent a significant theological development in or deepening of the theology of the family, he certainly kept the issue alive.

3.2 The Significance of *Familiaris Consortio* for Marriage and the Family

While Paul VI popularised the expression, “the family, the domestic church”,¹⁶⁸ it was Pope John Paul II who plumbed its depths. He furnished the Church with the most significant post-Conciliar magisterial exposition of the family as domestic church: *Familiaris Consortio*, the Apostolic Exhortation on the Role of the Family in the Modern World. The purpose of this ‘*Magna Carta* of the family’¹⁶⁹ was, firstly, to reiterate the value of marriage and the family in the life of the Church and, secondly, to address the changes in society and culture that affect the institution of the family. This section will unpack the theological riches of this document, focussing, in particular, on the ecclesial status of the family. Drawing on the insights of

¹⁶⁴ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelisation in the Modern World, Vatican Website, December 8, 1975, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html, sec. 71, (hereafter cited as EV).

¹⁶⁵ EN, sec. 71.

¹⁶⁶ EN, sec. 70.

¹⁶⁷ EN, sec. 71.

¹⁶⁸ Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Towards a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, 41.

¹⁶⁹ Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Towards a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, 41.

Cardinal Marc Ouellet, this section will proceed by delineating the numerous references to domestic church according to the following three categories:

1. Nature: The family is a domestic Church: by the Word, the sacraments, and its own unity
2. Mission: The family's mission in evangelization
3. Life: Life within the family as a domestic sanctuary.¹⁷⁰

These three categories incarnate the “principal characteristics of the Church – communion, mission and worship – at the level of the family.”¹⁷¹

3.2.1. The Nature of the Domestic Church

The nature of the family is intrinsic to the very structure of human creation. As John Paul II points out, the identity of the family “is willed by God in the very act of creation.”¹⁷² Consequently, John Paul II suggests that the family must “go back to the beginning to attain self-knowledge” and thereby realise its primordial nature.¹⁷³ As we saw in Chapter 1, the family was, within Israel, the fundamental cell for the propagation of the Covenant: it was *Covenant Bearer*.¹⁷⁴ On the basis of these foundational points, John Paul II sees that “marriage and the family ... look intrinsically to their fulfilment in Christ.”¹⁷⁵ This fulfilment was embraced by the early Christian families, who, as we saw in Chapter 1, lived as bearers of the New Covenant by becoming the central places for worship and faith transmission.

Given its immersion in the unfolding of salvation history, the family's identity is necessarily Christo-centric and, consequently, Church-centric. Thus, in his reading of *Familiaris*

¹⁷⁰ Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Towards a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, 42: “These references [to the domestic church] can be grouped into three categories. The first, comprising numbers 21, 38, 48 and 49, relates to the basis for the affirmation that the family is a domestic Church: by Word, the Sacraments, and its own unity, the family is a particular actualisation of ecclesial communion. Numbers 51, 52, 53 and 54 underline the family's mission in evangelization, which is based on its participation in the mission of the Church: “the evangelisation of the future depends in large part on the domestic church” (52). Finally, numbers 55, 59 and 61 refer to life within the family as a domestic sanctuary where prayer and worship are offered. In these three categories we find the reflection, or rather, incarnation, of the principal characteristics of the Church – communion, mission, and worship – at the level of the family.”

¹⁷¹ Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Towards a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, 42.

¹⁷² FC, sec. 3.

¹⁷³ FC, sec. 17.

¹⁷⁴ The argument for the family's nature and mission as Covenant Bearer can be found in Chapter 1.1 of this dissertation.

¹⁷⁵ FC, sec. 17.

Consortio, Atkinson argues that “John Paul II situates the identity of the family along two axes: Christ and the Church.”¹⁷⁶ The nature of the family is both Christological and Ecclesial.

The Christological dimension of the family’s nature is grounded in the spouses’ interior reference to Christ through the sacrament of marriage and that sacrament’s two ends, union and procreation. John Paul II gives most attention to the unitive goal of marriage: “their (the spouses) belonging to each other is a real representation, by means of the sacramental sign, of the very relationship of Christ and the Church.”¹⁷⁷ Made visible in the union of two persons, the spouses represent “the mystery of Christ’s incarnation and the mystery of his covenant.”¹⁷⁸ As Saint Paul instructed husbands and wives to love as Christ loves¹⁷⁹, so too does John Paul II urge spouses to “participate truly in the irrevocable indissolubility that binds Christ to the Church, his bride, loved by him to the end.”¹⁸⁰ In this way, they will become a “living reflection of and a real sharing in God’s love for humanity and the love of Christ the Lord for the Church, his bride.”¹⁸¹ Commenting on these statements, Carlo Caffarra argues that “man and woman participate in the unfathomable truth of the gift of Christ on the Cross, and in that way their marriage becomes a real symbol of what happened on Calvary.”¹⁸² For John Paul II, the unitive end of marriage is a concrete manifestation of the Christological dimension of the family’s nature.

For John Paul II, the ecclesial dimension of the family is also grounded in marriage and that sacrament’s two ends. In other words, the Christological nature of the family, grounded in the indissoluble union of husband and wife, is conducive to the ecclesial nature of the family, which springs from the procreative end of marriage.

John Paul II states, “Christian marriage and the Christian family must build up the Church: for in the family the human person is not only brought into being... but by means of rebirth of baptism and education in the faith the child is also introduced into God’s family, which is the Church.”¹⁸³ Through procreation, and the increase of the people of God through baptism, the

¹⁷⁶ Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 317.

¹⁷⁷ FC, sec. 13.

¹⁷⁸ FC, sec. 13.

¹⁷⁹ Ephesians 5: 21 – 33

¹⁸⁰ FC, sec. 20.

¹⁸¹ FC, sec. 17.

¹⁸² Carlo Caffarra, “Marriage and Family in the thought of Karol Wojtyla,” *The Family in the Modern World. A symposium on Pope John Paul II’s Familiaris Consortio*, (Washington DC: The American Family Institute, 1982), 60.

¹⁸³ FC, sec. 15.

family is stamped with an ecclesial identity. In this way, the family can be seen as the foundation of the Church; it is the first cell of one's belonging to the people of God. Spousal fruitfulness manifests, specifically through baptism of children, the ecclesial dimension of the family's nature.

The Catechism states, "For all the baptised, children or adults, faith must grow after Baptism. Baptism is the source of that new life in Christ from which the entire Christian life springs forth."¹⁸⁴ Christian life is inherently social; it requires community, it *is* community in Christ. Therefore, as children are immersed into new life in Christ through Baptism, the family becomes the primary community wherein the baptised grow in faith. Reiterating this claim, the Catechism states: "For the grace of Baptism to unfold, the parents' help is important... Their task is a truly ecclesial function."¹⁸⁵ As parents are responsible for bringing forth their children for Baptism, it is for them too to foster the family as an ecclesial community wherein their children can grow in faith. Thus the family is truly a domestic church when it fulfils its distinct ecclesial role: the nurturing of children in faith.

The Church, as stated in the Catechism is:

a convocation or an assembly. It designates the assemblies of the people, usually for a religious purpose. *Ekklesia* is used frequently in the Greek Old Testament for the assembly of the Chosen People before God, above all for their assembly on Mount Sinai where Israel received the Law and was established by God as his holy people. By calling itself "Church," the first community of Christian believers recognized itself as heir to that assembly.¹⁸⁶

The family is also one such convocation. Insofar as it contributes to the growth of the universal community of believers by bringing forward children for baptism, the family becomes a true ecclesial community in its own right. The family is the foundational structure of the Church. It is the first rung in the assembly and the first place of a child's initiation in the faith, which is ratified through baptism.

The family is no mere image of the Church, or a cell that stands apart from the Church, but an ecclesial reality that is organically and fundamentally part of the Church. John Paul II argues that "the Christian family is grafted into the mystery of the Church to such a degree as to

¹⁸⁴ CCC 1254.

¹⁸⁵ CCC 1255.

¹⁸⁶ CCC 751.

become a *sharer*, in its own way, in the saving mission proper to the Church.”¹⁸⁷ He eloquently characterises the family as a “communion of persons.”¹⁸⁸ It is established by “virtue of the covenant of married life”¹⁸⁹, built upon by the “broader communion of family, or parents and children”¹⁹⁰, and animated through the “interpersonal relationships of different members of the family.”¹⁹¹ The family, therefore, is an actualisation of a communion of persons, imbued with a Christological and ecclesial nature. It is a fundamental and organic part of the Church.

3.2.2. The Mission of the Domestic Church

Pope John Paul II turns his attention to the family’s mission in part three of *Familiaris Consortio*, entitled “The Role of the Christian Family”. In this section, John Paul II expresses his deep conviction that the family’s mission arises organically from the family’s Christological and ecclesial nature. To this end, he calls on families to “become what you are.”¹⁹² The family’s mission is fittingly summarised as evangelisation,¹⁹³ and is constituted by four aspects:¹⁹⁴

1. Forming a community of persons
2. Serving life
3. Participating in the development of society
4. Sharing in the life and mission of the Church

These four tasks attributed to the mission of the family are, as Atkinson highlights, “marks of the Church.”¹⁹⁵ In fact, he rightly argues that “if the family truly shares in the life and nature of the Church then it cannot be separated from the Church but must be inserted into her very reality.”¹⁹⁶

The family is called as a community of persons.¹⁹⁷ The first communion is established between husband and wife in the covenant of marriage. Signifying their christocentric nature, John Paul II writes, “Christian couples are called to participate truly in the irrevocable indissolubility that

¹⁸⁷ FC, sec. 49.

¹⁸⁸ FC, sec. 18.

¹⁸⁹ FC, sec. 19.

¹⁹⁰ FC, sec. 20.

¹⁹¹ FC, sec. 21.

¹⁹² FC, sec. 17.

¹⁹³ Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Towards a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, 42.

¹⁹⁴ FC, sec. 17.

¹⁹⁵ Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 317.

¹⁹⁶ Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 317.

¹⁹⁷ FC, sec. 18: “The family, which is founded and given life by love, is a community of persons: of husband and wife, of parents and children, of relatives. Its first task is to live with fidelity the reality of communion in a constant effort to develop an authentic community of persons.”

binds Christ to the Church, his bride, loved by him to the end.”¹⁹⁸ This conjugal communion thus constitutes the foundation for broader communion of family. “This communion is rooted in the natural bonds of flesh and blood and grows to its specifically human perfection with the establishment and maturing of the still deeper and richer bonds of the spirit...”¹⁹⁹ Sustaining this communion is the Holy Spirit who, as John Paul II states, “is poured forth in the celebration of the sacraments.”²⁰⁰ The inexhaustible sustenance from the sacraments unites the members of the family and “links them with Christ and with each other in the unity of the Church of God.” As the family becomes a realisation of ecclesial communion, John Paul II argues that “it can and should be called the domestic church.”²⁰¹

The family is called to serve life.²⁰² In this dimension of its mission, the family actualises “in history the original blessing of the Creator – that of transmitting by procreation the divine image from person to person.”²⁰³ Fecundity is understood as “the sign of conjugal love, the living testimony of the full reciprocal self-giving of the spouses.”²⁰⁴ Through fecundity the family enlarges the Church. Here, John Paul II reminds parents that fecundity is not restricted to the procreation of children, but in the enrichment of the “moral, spiritual and supernatural life which the father and mother are called to hand on to their children, and through the children to the Church and to the world.”²⁰⁵ Reiterating the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, John Paul II reminds parents of their solemn obligation to educate their offspring.²⁰⁶ He argues that a child’s first experience of the Church is through the family and thus compels parents to authentically transmit the faith to their children through “the witness of their lives... by praying

¹⁹⁸ FC, sec. 20.

¹⁹⁹ FC, sec. 21.

²⁰⁰ FC, sec. 21.

²⁰¹ FC, sec. 21.

²⁰² FC, sec. 18.

²⁰³ FC, sec. 28.

²⁰⁴ FC, sec. 28.

²⁰⁵ FC, sec. 28.

²⁰⁶ FC, sec. 36: “The task of giving education is rooted in the primary vocation of married couples to participate in God’s creative activity: by begetting in love and for love a new person who has within himself or herself the vocation to growth and development, parents by that very fact take on the task of helping that person effectively to live a fully human life. As the Second Vatican Council recalled, “since parents have conferred life on their children, they have a most solemn obligation to educate their offspring. Hence, parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children. Their role as educators is so decisive that scarcely anything can compensate for their failure in it. For it devolves on parents to create a family atmosphere so animated with love and reverence for God and others that a well-rounded personal and social development will be fostered among the children. Hence, the family is the first school of those social virtues which every society needs.” The right and duty of parents to give education is essential, since it is connected with the transmission of human life; it is original and primary with regard to the educational role of others, on account of the uniqueness of the loving relationship between parents and children; and it is irreplaceable and inalienable, and therefore incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others.”

with their children, by reading the word of God with them and by introducing them deeply through Christian initiation into the Body of Christ...”²⁰⁷ In fact he argues that parents can only full realise their role when “they are begetters not only of bodily life but also of the life that through the Spirit’s renewal flows from the Cross and Resurrection of Christ.”²⁰⁸ Precisely because the family is commissioned to transmit life, both bodily and spiritually, and contribute to the increase of God’s people, it is rightly called a domestic church.

The family is called to participate in the development of society.²⁰⁹ In paragraphs 42-48, John Paul II argues that the principal way families contribute to the development of society is through prophetic witness. The words of the *Catechism* about the mission of lay people in general are also applicable here: “by virtue of their prophetic mission, lay people are called... to be witnesses to Christ in all circumstances and at the very heart of the community of mankind.”²¹⁰ Atkinson argues that the prophetic role of Jesus is revealed “whenever the family acts as a believing and evangelising community.”²¹¹ The prophetic value of the family’s contribution to the development of society cannot be underestimated. As Atkinson aptly states, “[l]ike the prophets of old, the family is a sign of contradiction when it presents the values of the gospel and its claims to the secular world, inviting all to come to Christ and follow him.”²¹² Inestimable in value is the family when it operates as a Christian witness, and prophet, for the development of society.

The family is called to “participate in the life and mission of the Church.”²¹³ In this section, John Paul II explicitly affirms the ecclesial character of the family’s mission by linking it to the mission of the broader Church. The family is integrated into the Church through the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments. Through these, the Church “encourages and guides the Christian family to the service of love so that it may imitate and relive the same self-giving and sacrificial love that the Lord Jesus has for the entire human race.”²¹⁴ Thus the Church enables the family to realise its Christological identity as well as its ecclesial mission. “In turn, the Christian family is grafted into the mystery of the Church to

²⁰⁷ FC, sec. 39.

²⁰⁸ FC, sec. 39.

²⁰⁹ FC, sec. 18.

²¹⁰ CCC 942.

²¹¹ Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 318.

²¹² Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 318.

²¹³ FC, sec. 49.

²¹⁴ FC, sec. 49.

such a degree as to become a sharer, in its own way, in the saving mission proper to the Church.”²¹⁵ This assertion places a great esteem upon the family’s role in salvation history.

John Paul II commissions the family to manifest the saviour’s living presence in the world.²¹⁶ Through mutual love, fruitfulness, solidarity, and faithfulness the family is encouraged to become a witness of Christ’s presence. As an evangelising community, John Paul II encourages families to “listen to the word of God with reverence and proclaim it confidently.”²¹⁷ Thus the family is a christocentric entity, charged with the mission of apostolic witness, revealing this nature to the world. Through the sacrament of matrimony, that establishes the foundation of the domestic church, and in the sacrament of baptism that unites all members of the family as one, John Paul II reminds families of bountiful grace they have received as strength so as to “transmit the faith, to sanctify and transform our present society according to God’s plan.”²¹⁸

Christ and the Church is the source of the family’s identity, and in turn the family contributes in its own unique way to the mission of the Church as it reveals Christ to the world. Echoing the words of *Gaudium et Spes* 48, John Paul II declares the family an “intimate community of life and love” and thus “has the mission to become more and more what it is...”²¹⁹ As families share in the life of the Church, through Word and Sacraments, they can then undertake their ecclesial mission to “guard, reveal and communicate love”²²⁰, and become living witnesses of Christ’s presence in the world.

3.2.3 Life in the Domestic Church

Ouellet’s third category of analysis of *Familiaris Consortio* considers John Paul II’s discussion of life within the family as a domestic sanctuary.²²¹ In other words, Ouellet suggests, the life of the family is fundamentally tied up with the sanctification and holiness of its members. To this end, Ouellet draws on two characteristics as central to family life: sacraments and prayer. Regarding the sacraments, it is the sacred bond of marriage, participation in the Eucharist, and Baptism, that are necessary for the sanctification of the domestic church. In addition to the

²¹⁵ FC, sec. 49.

²¹⁶ FC, sec. 50.

²¹⁷ FC, sec. 51.

²¹⁸ FC, sec. 52.

²¹⁹ FC, sec. 17.

²²⁰ FC, sec. 17.

²²¹Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Towards a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, 42.

sacraments, John Paul II suggests prayer as another necessary characteristic of life in the domestic church.

As the family is called to share in the life and mission of the Church, John Paul II highlights the centrality of the sacraments as the primary means of sanctification. First and foremost he refers to the sacrament of marriage, in which the Christian family is “rooted and from which it draws nourishment...”²²² He rightly adds that the sacrament of matrimony is the “specific source and original means of sanctification for Christian married couples and families.”²²³ It is the sacrament of matrimony that fortifies spouses, enables them to fulfil their familial mission and, as John Paul II states, confers “on them the grace and moral obligation of transforming their whole lives into a spiritual sacrifice...”²²⁴ Sacramental marriage is absolutely fundamental for the foundation and sustenance of the domestic church.

The sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist are also essential to the sanctification of the family as the domestic church. For John Paul II, the family’s sanctity, rooted in Baptism and Marriage, attains its “highest expression” in partaking in the Eucharist.²²⁵ He beautifully expresses the idea that Christian marriage flows from the Eucharist when he states: “[I]n this sacrifice of the New and Eternal Covenant, Christian spouses encounter the source from which their own marriage covenant flows, is interiorly structured and continuously renewed.”²²⁶ In addition to uniting the members of the domestic church, the Eucharist also provides them with sustenance for their mission. John Paul II writes:

[B]y partaking in the Eucharistic bread, the different members of the Christian family become one body, which reveals and shares in the wider unity of the Church. Their sharing in the Body of Christ that is *given up* and in His Blood that is *shed* becomes a never-ending source of missionary and apostolic dynamism for the Christian family.²²⁷

The Eucharist is the essential means of the family’s sanctification. It is the sacrament through which spouses receive the meaning of Christ’s nuptial bond with the Church. Clarifying this, Ouellet suggests that the “Eucharist is the source of marriage because it seals the nuptial bond of man with God in Christ’s body and blood.”²²⁸ Since marriage is a participation in Christ’s

²²² FC, sec. 55.

²²³ FC, sec. 56.

²²⁴ FC, sec. 56.

²²⁵ FC, sec. 57.

²²⁶ FC, sec. 57.

²²⁷ FC, sec. 57.

²²⁸ Ouellet, *Mystery and Sacrament of Love: A Theology of Marriage and the Family for the New Evangelization* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 165.

union with his bride the Church, “marriage receives its entire sacramental significance from this context: the representation of the paschal sacrifice that establishes the nuptial bond between Christ and the Church.”²²⁹ As the representation of the nuptial sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Eucharist is central to the family’s growth in sanctity.

Baptism is, for John Paul II, the third essential sacrament in the family’s life. He writes, “by means of baptism, man and woman are definitively placed within the new and eternal covenant, in the spousal covenant of Christ with the Church.”²³⁰ Thus baptism is an incorporation into Christ and, as stated by Ouellet, “an introduction into his spousal ethos.”²³¹ Baptism is also necessary for the children of the couple and the increase of the Church. It is the means of rebirth in Christ through which “the child is also introduced into God’s family, which is the Church.”²³² Baptism is what unites the members of the family so as to form a domestic church, whilst also increasing God’s family; the Church. Furthermore, baptism is also fundamental to the mission of the domestic church, for John Paul II argues that the “apostolic mission of the family is rooted in baptism...”²³³ Thus baptism is the source of both the nature and mission of the domestic church.

Matrimony, Eucharist, and Baptism each contribute to the sanctification of the family. Whilst each sacrament is necessary, it is important to note that the domestic church requires a dynamic interrelation of all three sacraments. It is not one sacrament alone that constitutes the family as the domestic church, but all three that work together. As John Paul II states in *Familiaris Consortio*, the family is “grounded in baptism and has its highest expression in the Eucharist, to which Christian marriage is intimately connected.”²³⁴ These three sacraments are so intimately united in establishing the family as a domestic church that if one is removed the triad would cease to be, and so too would the family lose its ecclesial nature and mission.

²²⁹ This explanation of *Familiaris Consortio* 13: ‘Their belonging to each other is the real representation, by means of the sacramental sign, of the very relationship of Christ with the Church. Spouses are therefore the permanent reminder to the Church of what happened on the Cross; they are for one another and for the children witnesses to the salvation in which the sacrament makes them sharers’ is taken from Ouellet, *Mystery and Sacrament of Love*, 166.

²³⁰ FC, sec. 13.

²³¹ Ouellet, *Mystery and Sacrament of Love*, 161.

²³² FC, sec. 15.

²³³ FC, sec. 52.

²³⁴ FC, sec. 57.

The second aspect of John Paul II's understanding of life in the domestic church is *prayer*. In sections 59 – 61, he distinguishes between three categories of prayer in regard to the family, namely, family prayer, education in prayer, and liturgical prayer.

Familial prayer is at once necessary because of the requirement through Baptism, and it is also sanctifying because it invokes the presence of Christ, this it is central to the domestic church. John Paul II suggests that prayer is “both a consequence of and a requirement for the communion bestowed by the sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony.”²³⁵ He then reminds families of the promise Christ gave: *Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* (Mt 18: 19-20) For John Paul II, this passage has a particular significance for families who pray together. Confirming the importance of prayer John Paul II states “the dignity and responsibility of the Christian family as the domestic Church can be achieved only with God's unceasing aid, which will surely be granted if it is humbly and trustingly petitioned in prayer.”²³⁶

John Paul II, reminding parents of their dignity and mission, decrees that they bear the “responsibility of educating their children in prayer, introducing them to gradual discovery of the mystery of God and to personal dialogue with Him...”²³⁷ Because parents are enriched by the office of the sacrament of matrimony he reminds them that their children “should be taught according to the faith received in Baptism, to have a knowledge of God, to worship Him and to love their neighbour.”²³⁸ John Paul II's encouragement to education in prayer is not an original teaching, but a reminder of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council.²³⁹

²³⁵ FC, sec. 59.

²³⁶ FC, sec. 59.

²³⁷ FC, sec. 60.

²³⁸ FC, sec. 60.

²³⁹ GS, sec 50: “As a result, with their parents leading the way by example and family prayer, children and indeed everyone gathered around the family hearth will find a readier path to human maturity, salvation and holiness. Graced with the dignity and office of fatherhood and motherhood, parents will energetically acquit themselves of a duty which devolves primarily on them, namely education and especially religious education.”

GE, sec 3: “Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators. This role in education is so important that only with difficulty can it be supplied where it is lacking. Parents are the ones who must create a family atmosphere animated by love and respect for God and man, in which the well-rounded personal and social education of children is fostered. Hence the family is the first school of the social virtues that every society needs. It is particularly in the Christian family, enriched by the grace and office of the sacrament of matrimony, that children should be taught from their early years to have a knowledge of God according to the faith received in Baptism, to worship Him, and to love their neighbour. Here, too, they find their first experience of a wholesome human society and of the Church.”

Writing about liturgical prayer in the life of the domestic church John Paul II urges families to participate together in the celebration of the Eucharist. He proceeds to discuss the importance of praying the Divine Office in common, as well as meditating on the word of God.²⁴⁰ This echoes the words of Chrysostom who declared:

It is necessary for everyone to know Scriptural teachings, and this is especially true for children... We are so concerned about our children's schooling; if only we were equally zealous in bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord... Let us give them a pattern to imitate; from their earliest years let us teach them to study the Bible.²⁴¹

In this particular section of *Familiaris Consortio*, John Paul II provides several ideas for the ways in which families can pray together. Such emphasis is given to the value of prayer for he argues that “the dignity and responsibility of the Christian family as the domestic church can be achieved only with God’s unceasing aid”²⁴², which is petitioned through prayer.

The significance of *Familiaris Consortio* cannot be underestimated for its contribution to the theological development and understanding of the family as the domestic church. The richness and depth of John Paul II’s thought in *Familiaris Consortio*, as compared with earlier magisterial treatments of the topic is striking. What received only minimal attention during the Second Vatican Council, and was briefly reiterated by Paul VI, was given depth by John Paul II in this apostolic exhortation. In articulating the nature, mission, and life of the family, he was able to provide a way in which to suggest that the family is “not merely a place where the Church’s pastoral work is to be ‘applied,’ but an authentic manifestation of the Church itself.”²⁴³ *Familiaris Consortio* certainly stands as the pioneering document for further discussion on the ecclesial status of the family.

²⁴⁰ FC, sec. 61: “An important purpose of the prayer of the domestic Church is to serve as the natural introduction for the children to the liturgical prayer of the whole Church, both in the sense of preparing for it and of extending it into personal, family and social life. Hence the need for gradual participation by all the members of the Christian family in the celebration of the Eucharist, especially on Sundays and feast days, and of the other sacraments, particularly the sacraments of Christian initiation of the children. The directives of the Council opened up a new possibility for the Christian family when it listed the family among those groups to whom it recommends the recitation of the Divine Office in common.”

²⁴¹ Roth and Anderson, *On Marriage and Family Life*, 67: Chrysostom, Homily 21

²⁴² FC, sec. 59.

²⁴³ Ouellet, *Mystery and Sacrament of Love*, 175.

3.3. The Domestic Church in other Magisterial Documents

Whilst *Familiaris Consortio* has served as the central teaching document pertaining to the family as the domestic church, there were other magisterial documents published during John Paul II's pontificate, which continued to develop the Church's teaching on the family.

3.3.1. *Catechesi Tradendae*

Pope John Paul II demonstrated his concern for the family even before the publication of *Familiaris Consortio*. *Catechesi Tradendae*, the 1979 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "On Catechesis in our Time," exemplifies the enduring nature of John Paul II's interest in the mission of the family, specifically its catechetical role.

In *Catechesi Tradendae*, John Paul II's particular focus is the family's role as teacher and bearer of faith. He reiterates the insights of Vatican II regarding parents, emphasising that they are their children's first educators in the faith and that, as such, they should strive to be living witnesses. Their role, in short, is "irreplaceable."²⁴⁴ He adds that care ought to be taken to explain the liturgical celebrations and special feast days in which the family may participate, and that "parents must strive to follow and repeat, within the setting of family life, the more methodical teaching received elsewhere."²⁴⁵ It is, therefore, the duty and responsibility of parents to reinforce their children's learnings at Mass, religious education classes, or schools. Emphasising the fundamental role of parents in the transmission of faith, John Paul II adds that family catechesis "precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis."²⁴⁶ Recognising the challenges that this presents, he adds:

Furthermore, in places where anti-religious legislation endeavours even to prevent education in the faith, and in places where widespread unbelief or invasive secularism makes real religious growth practically impossible, "the church of the home" remains the one place where children and young people can receive an authentic catechesis.²⁴⁷

Given the pervasiveness of secularism in contemporary Western culture, this poignant statement, though written in 1979, remains perennially relevant to families today. Even in the

²⁴⁴ John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, Apostolic Exhortation on Catechesis in Our Time, Vatican Website, October 16, 1979, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae.html, sec. 68, (hereafter cited as CT).

²⁴⁵ CT, sec. 68.

²⁴⁶ CT, sec. 68.

²⁴⁷ CT, sec. 68.

most difficult of circumstances, parents remain responsible for ensuring the authentic transmission of faith to children.

Though *Catechesi Tradendae* does not contribute new ideas to the Church's understanding of the family's ecclesial character, it certainly does reveal John Paul II's long-standing concern for the family. For John Paul II, the catechetical service of parents is "beyond price".²⁴⁸

3.3.2. Christifideles Laici

John Paul II reiterates his interest in the catechetical role of the Christian family in *Christifideles Laici* (1988), "On the vocation and the mission of the lay faithful in the church and in the world." Given on the 30th of December, the Feast of the Holy Family, this Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation demonstrates a constant concern for the family.

The paragraph of principal interest to this study is number sixty-two, where John Paul II makes explicit reference to the family as domestic church.²⁴⁹ He explains that the family, considered under this designation, is the "natural and fundamental school for the formation in the faith."²⁵⁰ This is certainly reminiscent of the educative role of the family in the Old Testament, who served as the covenant bearer, the domestic community where faith was taught and thus transmitted to future generations. Then, in a striking phrase, he reminds parents of the sacramental grace received in matrimony, a grace which is of foundational significance to the mission of the family. He writes:

Father and mother receive from the Sacrament of Matrimony the grace and the ministry of the Christian education of their children, before whom they bear witness and to whom they transmit both human and religious values.²⁵¹

In these words, John Paul II unequivocally affirms the importance of sacramental marriage for the life and mission of Christian families: is the source of grace that enables a family to live as a sanctuary of faith transmission, and ultimately as a domestic church.

Concluding this section, John Paul II writes:

²⁴⁸ CT, sec. 68.

²⁴⁹ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World, Vatican Website, December 30, 1988, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici.html, sec. 62, (hereafter cited as CL).

²⁵⁰ CL, sec. 62.

²⁵¹ CL, sec. 62.

The more that Christian spouses and parents grow in the awareness that their ‘domestic church’ participates in the life and mission of the universal Church, so much the more will their sons and daughters be able to be formed in a ‘sense of the Church’ and will perceive all the beauty of dedicating their energies to the service of the Kingdom of God.²⁵²

Here he flags the ecclesial significance of the family, suggesting that the family’s life and mission is intimately connected to the life and mission of the universal Church. This is a fundamental point that illustrates the way in which the family is a real domestic church and, moreover, is a genuine reality in the Church’s structure.

Written seven years after *Familiaris Consortio*, *Christifidelis Laici* indicates an increasing belief in the thought of John Paul II, that the family forms a genuine component in the structure of the Church. *Christifidelis Laici* does more than reiterate John Paul II’s interest in the mission or catechetical role of the family; it indicates a growing, though implicit, conviction that the family is more than a mere added constituent of the Church, but is a genuine component of the Universal Church.

3.3.3. *Gratissimam Sane*

Gratissimam Sane, the so-called *Letter to Families*, is another major document in which Pope John Paul II develops his thought on the ecclesial character of the family. Addressed to families during the Year of the Family, *Gratissimam Sane* makes several references to the domestic church and the way in which it is called to fulfil its mission and ministry in service of the universal Church. John Paul II’s thought on the family *Gratissimam Sane* focusses on two key points: the family is a *communio personarum*, and prayer is central to the family as domestic church.

John Paul II’s first key point in *Gratissimam Sane* is that the family is a *communio personarum*. His first step in making this point is to turn to the theological origins of the family in the Book of Genesis, a step he also takes in *Familiaris Consortio*. In the creation of man and woman God speaks to the newly-created beings, blessing them and commanding them to: *Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it* (Gen 1:28). John Paul II believes this to be an “analogy of begetting and of fatherhood and motherhood...”²⁵³ He explains this analogy further:

²⁵² CL, sec. 62.

²⁵³ John Paul II, *Gratissimam Sane*, Letter to Families, Vatican Website, February 2, 1994, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_02021994_families.html, sec. 6, (hereafter cited as GrS).

No living being on earth except man was created 'in the image and likeness of God'. Human fatherhood and motherhood, while remaining biologically similar to that of other living beings in nature, contain in an essential and unique way a 'likeness' to God which is the basis of the family as a community of human life, as a community of persons united in love.²⁵⁴

For John Paul II, the creation accounts speak of the family as a *communio personarum*, a living representation of that communion of persons which is the Holy Trinity. In the subsequent section of *Gratissimam Sane*, John Paul II grounds this communion of persons in the conjugal covenant of matrimony, "which opens the spouses to a lasting communion of love and of life."²⁵⁵ Thus in *Gratissimam Sane*, as in his other magisterial documents, John Paul II stresses that Holy Matrimony is the very foundation of the family, whereby "the communion of the spouses gives rise to the community of the family."²⁵⁶ John Paul II reminds spouses that children "consolidate that covenant, enriching and deepening the conjugal communion of the father and mother." The *I* and the *thou* in the union of spouses must, through openness to children, "move towards a 'society', a 'we',"²⁵⁷ which is the family, a community of persons. Through the covenant of persons in the Sacrament of Matrimony, pours forth a community of persons that fashions a family. Ultimately, for John Paul II, it is the unity of the two in Holy Matrimony that is the fundamental union for the establishment of the family, the *communio personarum*.

John Paul II's second key point about the family in *Gratissimam Sane* concerns prayer: if the family is to live as a domestic church, prayer must be important and central. In several places throughout his letter, he instructs parents and families to foster a life of prayer for the good of the domestic church.

Firstly, he reiterates the truth of Christ's presence when a family prays together. He states,

Prayer makes the Son of God present among us: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Mt18:20). This Letter to Families wishes in the first place to be a prayer to Christ to remain in every human family; an invitation to him, in and through the small family of parents and children, to dwell in the great family of nations, so that together with him all of us can truly say: "Our Father"! Prayer must become the dominant element of the Year

²⁵⁴ GrS, sec. 6.

²⁵⁵ GrS, sec. 7.

²⁵⁶ GrS, sec. 7.

²⁵⁷ GrS, sec. 7.

of the Family in the Church: prayer by the family, prayer for the family, and prayer with the family.²⁵⁸

Through familial prayer, Christ vivifies the family with his own presence. John Paul II teaches that it is through prayer and the consequent presence of Christ that the “strength and spiritual unity of the family” is cultivated; in other words, prayer galvanises the family as a *communio personarum*.²⁵⁹ Within the context of the current crisis plaguing families, wherein contraception and divorce are commonplace, John Paul II’s emphasis on family prayer as the source of familial unity remains vitally important and perennially valid. With wise counsel he writes,

The Apostle, bowing his knees before the Father, asks that the faithful “be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man” (Eph 3:16). This “inner strength” is necessary in all family life, especially at its critical moments, when the love which was expressed in the liturgical rite of marital consent with the words, “I promise to be faithful to you always... all the days of my life”, is put to a difficult test.²⁶⁰

Inner strength, which is cultivated through a life of prayer, is absolutely essential for the mission of the domestic church.

Gratissimam Sane provides a wealth of advice for the family as domestic church. Published in 1994, this letter remains vitally relevant for families today. It emphasises the Sacrament of Matrimony as foundational for the family, and the fundamental need for prayer in cultivating a Christo-centric domestic church.¹ The inherent connection between sacramental marriage and the domestic church is implied throughout. The nature and mission of the Christian family is grounded in the Sacrament of Marriage and nourished through a communal prayer life giving life to the *communio personarum* that God intended from the beginning.

3.4 Supporting the Domestic Church

In addition to its interest in developing a theology of the family, the post-conciliar Magisterium was also intent on offering guidelines for the pastoral care of families. John Paul II in particular makes several practical recommendations in regard to how the family ought to be supported by

²⁵⁸ GrS, sec. 4.

²⁵⁹ GrS, sec. 4.

²⁶⁰ GrS, sec. 7.

the broader Church in its mission as the domestic church. *Familiaris Consortio* is pre-eminent amongst his writings insofar as the pastoral care of the family is concerned. There, he dedicates an entire section to this cause. Part Four, entitled *Pastoral Care of the Family*, makes several recommendations for how the family can be supported pastorally. John Paul II's recommendations identify the necessity of pastoral care from bishops and priests, the promotion of marriage preparation programs, and the establishment of parish and family associations.

3.4.1. Pastoral Care

John Paul II begins by emphasising that pastoral care of the family should be a priority for every aspect of the Church. Thus he states that “every effort should be made to strengthen and develop pastoral care for the family, which should be treated as a real matter of priority, in the certainty that future evangelization depends largely on the domestic Church.”²⁶¹ Having declared the priority of pastoral care for the family, John Paul II goes on to explain how different groups within the Church can support the family. Bishops, he states, are “principally responsible in the diocese for the pastoral care of the family.” He adds:

As father and pastor, he must exercise particular solicitude in this clear priority sector of pastoral care. He must devote to it personal interest, care, time, personnel and resources, but above all personal support for the families and for all those who, in the various diocesan structures, assist him in the pastoral care of the family.²⁶²

For John Paul II, bishops are charged with an especial responsibility for the pastoral care of families by virtue of the spiritual paternity inherent in their office. This spiritual paternity is also meant to be the source of a living witness of fatherhood to families. He also addresses priests and deacons, suggesting that once “they have received timely and serious preparation for this apostolate,” they must act unceasingly towards families.²⁶³ To further improve pastoral support for the family John Paul II reiterates his desire for the establishment of the Pontifical Council for the Family, which he hopes will “be an effective instrument for aiding and promoting it at every level.”²⁶⁴

Addressing men and women religious, he first reiterates the significance and value of their chastity embraced for the Kingdom of Heaven, which he states ‘makes them ever more

²⁶¹ FC, sec. 65.

²⁶² FC, sec. 73.

²⁶³ FC, sec. 73.

²⁶⁴ FC, sec. 73.

available to dedicate themselves to the service of God and to the works of the apostolate.’²⁶⁵ Through their vocation of service, John Paul II calls men and women religious to visit families, offer teaching and counselling, and provide hospitality so that others may sense God’s presence and experience “practical examples of lives lived in charity and fraternal joy.”²⁶⁶

Addressing the laity, John Paul II acknowledges the valuable assistance that specialists in various fields can offer to families. Doctors, psychologists, lawyers, social workers – to name just a few important fields – are called to serve the domestic church as lay people.²⁶⁷ Yet, another agent of pastoral care that he proposes is The Family. He states “married couples act in communion and collaboration with the other members of the Church...” Families are living witnesses “of a life lived in conformity with the divine law in all its aspects...” Through their work with families, and as witnesses of Christian familial living, he accordingly entitles this the ‘family apostolate.’²⁶⁸

3.4.2. Marriage Preparation

Perhaps the most prominent form of pastoral care for families which John Paul II recommends is marriage preparation. He regards marriage preparation as “not only necessary in every case, but is also more urgently needed for engaged couples...”²⁶⁹ As Christian marriage “influences the holiness of large numbers of men and women,” he urges the Church to “promote better and

²⁶⁵ FC, sec. 74.

²⁶⁶ FC, sec. 74.

²⁶⁷ FC, sec. 75: Considerable help can be given to families by lay specialists (doctors, lawyers, psychologists, social workers, consultants, etc.) who either as individuals or as members of various associations and undertakings offer their contribution of enlightenment, advice, orientation and support. To these people one can well apply the exhortations that I had the occasion to address to the Confederation of Family Advisory Bureaus of Christian Inspiration: "Yours is a commitment that well deserves the title of mission, so noble are the aims that it pursues, and so determining, for the good of society and the Christian community itself, are the results that derive from it.... All that you succeed in doing to support the family is destined to have an effectiveness that goes beyond its own sphere and reaches other people too and has an effect on society The future of the world and of the Church passes through the family", in Pope John Paul II. *Familiaris Consortio*, n 75.

²⁶⁸ FC, sec 71: In this activity, married couples act in communion and collaboration with the other members of the Church, who also work for the family, contributing their own gifts and ministries. This apostolate will be exercised in the first place within the families of those concerned, through the witness of a life lived in conformity with the divine law in all its aspects, through the Christian formation of the children, through helping them to mature in faith, through education to chastity, through preparation for life, through vigilance in protecting them from the ideological and moral dangers with which they are often threatened, through their gradual and responsible inclusion in the ecclesial community and the civil community, through help and advice in choosing a vocation, through mutual help among family members for human and Christian growth together, and so on. The apostolate of the family will also become wider through works of spiritual and material charity towards other families, especially those most in need of help and support, towards the poor, the sick, the old, the handicapped, orphans, widows, spouses that have been abandoned, unmarried mothers and mothers-to-be in difficult situations who are tempted to have recourse to abortion, and so on, in Pope John Paul II. *Familiaris Consortio*, n 71.

²⁶⁹ FC, sec. 66.

more intensive programs of marriage preparation, in order to eliminate as far as possible the difficulties that many married couples find themselves in...”²⁷⁰ The burden of responsibility for marriage preparation lies with bishops and priests, for they are in positions to implement such programs in their diocese and parishes for the pastoral care of the people entrusted to them.

John Paul II also addresses the importance of marriage preparation in *Gratissimam Sane*, but in that document he offers the added perspective that preparation for future life as a couple “is above all the task of the family.”²⁷¹ Through the living witness of Christian marriage, spouses are able to influence their children, promoting marriage through the examples they live out on a daily basis. Furthermore, Christian families can serve as living witnesses to other couples and families, promoting Christian marriage and life in the domestic church. Hence, John Paul II “points out the need for a special *solidarity among families*.”²⁷²

3.4.3. Parish and Community Associations

A third aspect of John Paul II’s discussion of pastoral care for families in *Familiaris Consortio* is his recommendation for the establishment of *Associations of Families for Families*.²⁷³ John Paul II sees the implementation of such associations as necessary in order for the family to live out its mission as the domestic church because he recognises the influence and support that families can provide for each other. In regard to the establishment of ‘Associations of Families’, he states:

It will be their task to foster among the faithful a lively sense of solidarity, to favor a manner of living inspired by the Gospel and by the faith of the Church, to form consciences according to Christian values and not according to the standards of public opinion; to stimulate people to perform works of charity for one another and for others with a spirit of openness which will make Christian families into a true source of light and a wholesome leaven for other families.²⁷⁴

Whilst bishops, priests, religious and lay people are called to provide pastoral care for families, it is Christian families themselves who are an invaluable source of support for other families in the Church.

²⁷⁰ FC, sec. 66.

²⁷¹ GrS, sec. 16.

²⁷² GrS, sec. 16.

²⁷³ FC, sec. 72.

²⁷⁴ FC, sec. 72.

3.5 Post-Conciliar Doctrine and the Ecclesial Community

At the beginning of his papacy, John Paul II inherited the task of interpreting the recently published conciliar teachings that referred to the family as a domestic church. As that seed was planted by Fiordelli during the Second Vatican Council, and briefly picked up by Pope Paul VI, it was not until Pope John Paul II was entrusted with the papacy that the process of reevaluating the place of the family within ecclesiology began to take shape. However, the next challenge was the appropriation of this theology and the implementation of this new teaching, which was so novel and unfamiliar to the Church of the twentieth century.

In outlining and evaluating the significant contributions that John Paul II made in his publication of *Familiaris Consortio*, and the way in which it developed magisterial teachings pertaining to the family as a domestic church, it is clear that a new era was beginning in the Church that considered the family in a new light. The term domestic church, which lay dormant since the time of Augustine and Chrysostom, was beginning to re-emerge and promote the family in its proper place as an extension of the Universal Church. Whilst several theological developments were made, and recommendations given to support the family in its position as the domestic church, the following chapter will examine the way in which Pope John Paul II's teachings were received and applied.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DOMESTIC CHURCH IN POST-CONCILIAR PRACTISE

The future of humanity passes by way of the family.

It is therefore indispensable and urgent that every person of good will should endeavor to save and foster the values and requirements of the family.²⁷⁵

If any doctrine is to have a real impact on the life of the Church, a certain receptivity—indeed a *will* to receive it—and its pastoral application by the clergy and the faithful of the Church is essential. This is true for the doctrinal *Ressourcement* of the Patristic notion of the family as the domestic church. As the previous chapter detailed the doctrinal developments pertaining to the family in the years following Vatican II, this chapter will explore the way in which the teachings of John Paul II have been received and implemented—or not, as the case may be. It will investigate the challenges faced by the Church in the practical application of the teaching of the family.

4.1 Application of the Magisterial Teachings on a Universal Level

The immediate application of post-conciliar teachings on the family, on a universal level, includes such endeavours as the establishment of the Pontifical Council for the Family, the founding of the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family, and the inauguration of The Year of the Family. These three initiatives indicate the way in which John Paul II sought to apply post-conciliar teachings on the family onto the universal level of the Church. His teachings on the family, in texts such as *Familiaris Consortio*, *Catechesi Tradendae*, *Christifideles Laici*, were not mere niceties or impractical ideas. Rather, they intended to turn people’s minds to applying the theology of family in lived experience. This was an issue that was not only somewhat dormant for several centuries, but one that he understood was undergoing rapid changes²⁷⁶ and thus required urgent attention.

²⁷⁵ FC, sec. 86.

²⁷⁶ FC, sec. 1: “The family in the modern world, as much as and perhaps more than any other institution, has been beset by the many profound and rapid changes that have affected society and culture. Many families are living this situation in fidelity to those values that constitute the foundation of the institution of the family. Others have become uncertain and bewildered over their role or even doubtful and almost unaware of the ultimate meaning and truth of conjugal and family life.”

In *Familiaris Consortio*, John Paul II identified three groups of people needing support in their endeavour to live faithfully in their families; “those who are already aware of the value of marriage and the family... those who are uncertain and anxious and searching for the truth... those who are unjustly impeded from living freely their family lives....”²⁷⁷ Thus, in order to support these groups, and promote to the Church and world his concern for the family John Paul II first introduced projects on a universal level. These initiatives were not only significant for the life of the Church but, moreover, demonstrate Pope John Paul II’s love and concern for the future of the family.

4.1.1. Pontifical Council for the Family

One of John Paul II’s initiatives was to establish the Pontifical Council for the Family in the Motu Proprio, *Familia a Deo Instituta*. Here he reiterates the family’s role in the plan of salvation, and the challenges it faced. It states that the council ought to:

- a. work with the bishops, the Episcopal Conferences and their various bodies, in charge of family ministry;
- b. ensure the dissemination of the doctrine of the Church regarding family problems so that it can be integrally known and correctly presented to the Christian people both in catechesis and in scientific knowledge;
- c. coordinate pastoral activity in promoting responsible parenthood according to the teachings of the Church;
- d. encourage the elaboration of studies on matrimonial and family spirituality;
- e. encourage, support and coordinate efforts in defense of human life in all stages of its existence from conception;
- f. promote, through the work of specialized scientific institutes, case studies to integrate, on family issues, the theological sciences and human sciences so that the whole doctrine of the church is better understood by men good will;²⁷⁸

The Council for the Family has published several documents, four of special relevance to this discussion: *The Charter of the Rights of the Family*, *The Church and the International Year of the Family* (1983), *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* (1995), and the *Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage* (1996).

²⁷⁷ FC, sec. 1: “Knowing that marriage and the family constitute one of the most precious of human values, the Church wishes to speak and offer her help to those who are already aware of the value of marriage and the family and seek to live it faithfully, to those who are uncertain and anxious and searching for the truth, and to those who are unjustly impeded from living freely their family lives. Supporting the first, illuminating the second and assisting the others, the Church offers her services to every person who wonders about the destiny of marriage and the family.”

²⁷⁸ John Paul II, *Familia a Deo Instituta*, Motu Proprio, Vatican Website, May 13, 1981, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/la/motu_proprio/documents/hf_jp-ii_motu-proprio_09051981_familia-a-deo-instituta.html.

The *Charter of the Rights of the Family*, addresses the rights, needs and concerns of each member of the family. While upholding the inalienable rights of the family, it also condemns divorce, which “attacks the very institution of marriage”²⁷⁹ upon which the family is based.²⁸⁰ This document, however, seems to have been allowed to drift to the peripheries of the Church’s consciousness. Although the *Charter* was composed in collaboration with bishops, its content has not been effectively communicated to the rest of the Church. One need only search the website of the Australian Catholics Bishops Conference²⁸¹ to find there is no mention or link to the *Charter of the Rights of the Family*. In fact, whether there has been any mention of this charter in the preaching of bishops is a matter of serious doubt.

The Church and the International Year of the Family, published ten years after the *Charter*, is perhaps indicative of the Church’s awareness of a lack of communicating ideas from the universal level to the diocesan level. Thus the publication, *The Church and the International Year of the Family* (1993), made several recommendations to episcopal conferences and local churches, encouraging the establishment of committees to work together with bishops’ conferences and to be “in constant relationship with the Pontifical Council to inform about different activities.”²⁸² Such committees were encouraged to promote studies, research and development on issues related to the family²⁸³ and thus reflect the intentions of John Paul II when he stated “every effort should be made to strengthen and develop pastoral care for the family, which should be treated as a real matter of priority, in the certainty that future evangelization depends largely on **the domestic Church.**”²⁸⁴

The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality presents guidelines to parents in the teaching of sexuality. Despite its value, it received little to no attention from the bishops of Australia. In fact, Catholic Education Melbourne makes no reference to this document at all on its website. In a publication entitled, *Parent Engagement in Action*,²⁸⁵ which addresses the need for

²⁷⁹ *Charter of the Rights of the Family*, Vatican Website, October 22, 1983, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_19831022_family-rights_en.html, Article 6.

²⁸⁰ *Charter of the Rights of the Family*, Article 6, Section B.

²⁸¹ “The Catholic Church in Australia,” accessed 22 November, 2016, <https://www.catholic.org.au/>.

²⁸² Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Church and the International Year of the Family*, Vatican Website, December 25, 1993, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_19931225_family-year_it.html, Section 3.

²⁸³ *The Church and the International Year of the Family*, Section 3.

²⁸⁴ FC, sec. 65.

²⁸⁵ “Parent Engagement in Action,” Catholic Education Melbourne, accessed August 06, 2020, <https://www.cem.edu.au/getattachment/Our-Schools/Curriculum-Learning-Programs/Student->

partnerships between parents and schools, there is no reference to any document published by the Pontifical Council for the Family, or to any other ecclesial or diocesan organisation for the promotion of families. As the primary archdiocesan agency for religious education, it would seem obvious that Catholic Education Melbourne would refer to *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, or at least provide it to parents. The absence of evidence on this website, and the lack of endorsement from the Australian bishop's conference, indicates a break in communication between the Pontifical Council for the Family and local dioceses around the world.

In *Familiaris Consortio*, Pope John Paul II had explicitly addressed the need for marriage preparation.²⁸⁶ Thus the Pontifical Council for the Family published the document, *Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage* in 1996. This resource addresses all three areas of marriage preparation that Pope John Paul II referred to; “remote, proximate and immediate preparation.”²⁸⁷ It is a practical resource that evidently addresses John Paul II's recommendations for providing pastoral support for those preparing for marriage.

The establishment of the Pontifical Council for the Family was a step in the right direction, responding to Pope John Paul II's intention to address the needs of the family. On a universal level, this council has provided the Church with several important documents that support the family. Despite this achievement, the communication from the universal level to the local level is more than doubtful. Whilst these documents have indeed promoted the family, their teaching and recommendations have not always percolated through the rest of the Church.

4.1.2. John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family

John Paul II established the Pontifical Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family in 1982 through the Apostolic Constitution *Magnum Matrimonii Sacramentum*. Intended to be inaugurated on October 13, 1981, but delayed as a result of the attempted assassination of John Paul II that day, this institute was established to provide a place for the study of the theology

[Wellbeing/eXcel/Family-and-Community-Engagement/Parent_Engagement_in_Action_Guide_2015.pdf.aspx?lang=en-U](#)

²⁸⁶ FC, sec. 66.

²⁸⁷ FC, sec. 66.

of marriage, “and to set up institutes which would encourage the pastoral care of marriage and family.”²⁸⁸ In *Familiaris Consortio* John Paul II stated,

It must be emphasized once more that the pastoral intervention of the Church in support of the family is a matter of urgency. Every effort should be made to strengthen and develop pastoral care for the family, which should be treated as a real matter of priority, in the certainty that future evangelization depends largely on the domestic Church.

The establishment of this institute directly responds to John Paul II’s call for greater pastoral care for families. Students at the Institute receive scholarly formation in the study of marriage and the family. In such a way, their pastoral and ecclesial ministry for the good of the People of God will be more carefully and effectively carried out.²⁸⁹ The Institute is distinguished by the emphasis it places on pastoral care. In its founding constitution it states, ‘These institutes were to work in a special way in the field of pastoral care.’ Rather than limiting students to an academic program focussed solely on content, the John Paul II Institute places emphasis on the practical application of learning. In this way, it encourages its students to focus on providing pastoral care to families, as envisaged by John Paul II in *Familiaris Consortio*.²⁹⁰ Since its establishment, the institute has expanded to thirteen locations world-wide, an indication of its success on a universal level.

4.1.3. Year of the Family

The United Nations proclaimed 1994 as the *International Year of the Family*. Pope John Paul II used this opportunity to reiterate the mission of the family and thus established a *Year of the Family* in the Church, which began on the Feast of the Holy Family in 1993. The most significant event of this year was the inauguration of the World Meeting of Families. Taking place in Rome, and every three years thereafter in various locations around the world, the Pope asked Christian families a striking question: “what are you?” To this he replied, “we find a response already in early Christian times. In the post-apostolic period: ‘I am the domestic Church.’ In other words: I am an *Ecclesiola*: a little church.”²⁹¹ Pope John Paul II used this

²⁸⁸ John Paul II, *Magnum Matrimonii Sacramentum*, Apostolic Constitution on the Pontifical Institute for Studies of Marriage and Family, Vatican Website, October 7, 1982, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_07101982_magnum-matrimonii-sacramentum.html.

²⁸⁹ *Matrimonii Sacramentum*, 3.

²⁹⁰ FC, sec 73 – 76. These sections detail John Paul II’s vision for the pastoral care of families.

²⁹¹ “Speech on the Occasion of the World Meeting of Families, October 8, 1994,” Vatican Website, accessed November 22, 2016, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1994/october/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19941008_incontro-famiglie.html.

ancient reference to families to instruct them about their ecclesial nature and mission. He then spoke of the importance of two achievements in service of the family and the Church; the establishment of the Pontifical Council for the Family, and the John Paul II Institute.²⁹² Further to his address at the inaugural World Meeting of Families, Pope John Paul II published a significant letter, *Gratissimam Sane*, reiterating the task of Christian families.²⁹³ *Gratissimam Sane* stands out amongst John Paul II's many documents on the family for its clarity and depth of understanding in regard to the nature and mission of the domestic church. With the establishment of a Pontifical Council, a tertiary institution, and the inauguration of the World Meeting of Families, John Paul II sought to raise awareness of the important role of the family in the universal Church.

While the Pontifical Council for the Family was intended to disseminate Church teaching of the family, it is lacking in its ability to successfully translate or communicate its teaching to the rest of the Church. The John Paul II Institute, which has continued to grow over 35 years, now has over ten campuses established worldwide and continues to produce graduates who are specialised in the pastoral care of the family. The World Meeting of Families continues to gather every three years and provides families with catechesis and support for the domestic church. Although there remain serious questions about the Church's ability to translate universal principles to practical support for families, as particularly evidenced by the difficulty that Pontifical Council for the Family has, in communicating with local Churches, it is clear that Pope John Paul II himself provided a superb example, particularly in his words and deeds, of how families can be supported in their mission.

4.2 Application of the Magisterial Teachings on a Local Level

Whilst there have been some examples of the way in which the Church's teachings on the family have been applied on the Universal level, several initiatives have become common on a diocesan level around the world, such as Archbishops' Letters and the establishment of Marriage and Family offices. This section will outline the outstanding example of pastoral care of the family offered by Archbishop Samuel J. Aquila and his See, the Archdiocese of Denver. It will then consider some examples that lack application of the Magisterial teachings on the family, thus uncovering the shocking disparity between teaching and practice.

²⁹² Ibid. paragraph 3.

²⁹³ For further details of this publication, see 3.3.3. of this dissertation.

4.2.1. The Episcopate

Archbishop Samuel J. Aquila, Archbishop of Denver, is an exemplar of the support bishops can provide to families through the promotion of magisterial teaching on marriage and family. In his prior appointment as Bishop of Fargo, Aquila mandated a pre-marriage preparation course exploring the topics of natural family planning and the Theology of the Body. Aquila recall's "many of the couples were resistant to the change at first (the implementation of a compulsory pre-marriage course). However, as they participated, their hearts changed and they became open and receptive to the teaching."²⁹⁴ This is indicative of the positive way in which the teachings of the Church have been received and implemented through the episcopate. Illustrating the positive impact of such a course, Aquila shares a letter he received from a participant of the course:

She wrote: "At first I was angry that I had to take the course on natural family planning along with the theology of the body. But now, Bishop, while I am deeply grateful for what I have learned, I am angry, and I ask you, 'why was I not taught this much earlier, in high school?' It would have been saved much hurt and heartache in college if I had been taught this earlier and not listened to the voice of the world. My younger sister is still in high school and I am going to teach her what I have learned so she does not make the same mistakes I did."²⁹⁵

Bishop Aquila, moved by this letter, "mandated that Theology of the Body for Teens be taught and promoted in Fargo's Catholic high schools and in all religious education programmes." His actions exemplify the way in which a true shepherd of Christ and no hireling can positively impact the lives of the faithful when they are taught the truth of marriage and family. From this experience, Aquila argues that "the solution is not to adopt a pseudo truth about marriage or a falsely pastoral approach permeated with the casuistry of the Pharisees... What we need to do is relate the truth about marriage and the family to the heart of its gospel..."²⁹⁶ Unapologetically promoting the truth of marriage and family, particularly through mandated diocesan courses, is one such example of an episcopal act that promotes the magisterial teaching on the family.

Aquila also stresses the importance of the bishop's role in pastoral care of the family by highlighting that the faithful can be led into confusion when their bishops do not provide adequate support. Aquila argued that the confusion amongst Catholics about the truth of

²⁹⁴ Samuel J. Aquila, "Faithful Heralds of the Joy of the Gospel of Marriage," *Faith Magazine* vol. 46 May-June (2014), <https://www.faith.org.uk/article/faithful-heralds-of-the-joy-of-the-gospel-of-marriage>.

²⁹⁵ Aquila, "Faithful Heralds of the Joy of the Gospel of Marriage."

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

marriage and family points to the “failure of pastors, teachers and spiritual fathers. We have not succeeded in proclaiming the joy of the gospel of marriage to our people.”²⁹⁷ How noble the role of the bishop when he leads spouses to an understanding of the nature and mission of the family. Indeed, bishops are commissioned “to preach the Gospel of God to all men,” in keeping with the Lord’s command. They are “heralds of faith, who draw new disciples to Christ; they are authentic teachers” of the apostolic faith “endowed with the authority of Christ.”²⁹⁸ This duty does not involve palliating or ignoring the truth in order to succumb to the culture of aggressive secularism. As Bishop Aquila rightly stated, “Christ did not compromise for the sake of being pastoral.”²⁹⁹ Instead, Christ called people to conversion. Bishop Aquila’s mandate for pre-marriage preparation, as well as the compulsory study of the Theology of the Body in high schools, is a shining example of the way in which bishops can promote the mission of the family.

4.2.2. The Diocese

Aquila has continued to promote the mission of the family in his new See, the Archdiocese of Denver. In a pastoral letter entitled, *Family: Become What You Are*, Aquila offered an outstanding message to his diocese. His introduction acknowledges the influence of Pope John Paul II and, in particular, *Familiaris Consortio*, as the underlying inspiration for this pastoral letter. His primary intention for the letter was to “provide a solid foundation for the faith of the Archdiocese of Denver, and all people of good will, to effectively respond to the challenges that families experience today.”³⁰⁰ His systematic approach to the letter, which is comprised of three sections, summarises several key points from *Familiaris Consortio*, whilst effectively presenting suggestions for how John Paul II’s hope for the family can be lived.

Section one is dedicated to the family’s mission and meaning as derived from the Holy Trinity. In it he speaks of the inseparability of marriage from the family. Indeed, marriage is “the foundation of every family.”³⁰¹ Furthermore he adds, “when a husband and wife give of themselves and share love and truth with each other, they are able to reflect the image of the

²⁹⁷ Samuel J. Aquila, “To Faithfully Proclaim the Gospel of Marriage,” EWTN, accessed August 06, 2020, <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/to-faithfully-proclaim-the-gospel-of-marriage-5018>, reprinted in *L’Osservatore Romano*, June 27 (2014).

²⁹⁸ CCC 888.

²⁹⁹ Aquila, “To Faithfully Proclaim the Gospel of Marriage.”

³⁰⁰ Samuel J. Aquila, *Family: Become What You Are*, Pastoral Letter, Archdiocese of Denver, June 29, 2014, <https://archden.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/ABA-pastoral-letter-Family-Be-Who-You-Are-2014.pdf>, sec. 2.

³⁰¹ Aquila, *Family: Become What You Are*, sec. 4.

Holy Trinity.”³⁰² In this way he transmits the truth of marriage, and the way in which a spousal union images the Trinity. Illustrating the dignity and sacredness of their bond, Aquila states:

God created the world and the human race through the gift of his Word and the breath of the Spirit. In a similar way, men and women are able to participate in creation by bringing children into the world through their mutual consent and *one flesh* union. Sadly, our society has lost this understanding of marriage. Instead, the culture has dramatically shifted to promoting the individual and his or her supposed rights, often at the expense of the family. The idea of a ‘sincere gift of self’ – even in the context of marriage – seems irrelevant and a distant reality. In contemporary Western culture, marriage and the family have suffered the consequences of this shift, and no one has been hurt more by it than children, who deserve the committed, selfless love of their mother and father.³⁰³

Aquila leaves no room for confusion when he explains the way that spouses, and moreover families, participate in creation and thus image the Trinity.

Section two addresses the challenges faced in families and marriages in the contemporary culture. Recognising the way in which the family has been greatly undermined by the practices of contraception and divorce, he dedicates this section to reiterating the Church’s teaching on the sanctity of the marriage bond. A most poignant aspect of this section is Aquila’s reference to Augustine’s teaching on the three goods of marriage, which he translates as “the good of children, the gift of fidelity... and the good of the unbreakable bond.”³⁰⁴ After detailing the meaning of the three goods, he makes an outstanding suggestion to his flock: “I encourage you to commit these goods to memory, since they can help you discern what is a marriage from what is not.” The section discusses several challenges, namely divorce and same-sex unions, yet in each of these areas Aquila provides a pastoral response that respects the dignity of the human persons who encounter such trials. He states:

To those of you who suffer from same-sex attraction, *I say to you with fatherly care: you carry a heavy cross; your struggle is more than most of us understand. Your tears do not go unseen by Jesus. He understands your needs and longs to draw near to you.* Jesus calls you, like every disciple, to chastity. For those who are married, chastity means respecting the goods of marriage in all marital relations. For the unmarried it means refraining from sexual activity. Chastity recognizes the dignity of the human person and never treats another person as an object for pleasure. Chastity acknowledges the truth, dignity, meaning and purpose of sexual intimacy and requires self-mastery, which is difficult. But with the help of Christ chastity is possible, for we know in faith, “All things are possible to him

³⁰² Aquila, *Family: Become What You Are*, sec. 4.

³⁰³ *Ibid.* sec. 4.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.* sec. 5.

who believes.” Chastity is a gift that gives us the freedom to love as Christ loves and brings joy and peace to the human heart.³⁰⁵

This indeed is a pastoral response to the challenges faced by many. Aquila affirms the teaching of the Church, whilst reminding his people of the nearness of Christ. He concludes this section with a reminder that “if the family is to thrive in the face of these many cultural challenges, then the Church must redouble her efforts to teach about the joy, beauty and goods of marriage.”³⁰⁶

The third and final section of Aquila’s pastoral letter provides practical ways in which families can live out their mission. He argues that there are three concerns that ought to be addressed, namely “raising children in broken homes where only one parent is present, providing effective pastoral care for couples who are divorced and ‘remarried,’ and improving marriage preparation so that it both spiritually awakens and educates couples in the truth, goodness and beauty of marital love rooted in the theology of the body.”³⁰⁷

Intent on insisting that spouses, and indeed families, ought to centre their lives on Christ, Aquila states that the solution to issues in family life cannot lie simply in adopting ‘a pseudo-truth about marriage or a false pastoral approach... Instead, the solution is fidelity to the only Truth that really saves the human person: Jesus Christ.’³⁰⁸ Prior to even articulating practical suggestions for the support of the family, Aquila first exhorts spouses and families to remember that their origin and *telos* lies in Christ.³⁰⁹ Ensuring Christ as the foundation of the family, he provides five practical suggestions to be implemented:

1. The first essential way is the personal encounter with Jesus Christ, who leads us to encounter the Father and the Holy Spirit... *This is done through personal prayer and most especially the prayerful reading of the four Gospels.*
2. To live the sacramental life of the Church, most especially in the sacraments of the *Eucharist and Reconciliation*. We keep holy the Sabbath by attending Mass each Lord’s Day (Sunday) and we go to confession regularly, at least monthly, to experience the mercy and forgiveness of Jesus and grow in the virtues. These sacraments strengthen our relationship with the Trinity, strengthen the love of husband and wife for one another and for their children, and build up family life by keeping Christ at the center.

³⁰⁵ Aquila, *Family: Become What You Are*, sec. 7. (Italicisation is my own added emphasis).

³⁰⁶ Ibid. sec. 10.

³⁰⁷ Ibid. sec. 11.

³⁰⁸ Ibid. sec. 11.

³⁰⁹ Samuel J Aquila, Pastoral Letter, *Family: Become What You Are*, 11: “What we need to do is to relate the truth about marriage and the family to the Father’s plan, as found in the original unity between Adam and Eve, and to the joy that comes from experiencing the redemption and freedom from sin Christ won for us.”

3. A third step is to *pray together as a family*. There is the adage, “Families that pray together, stay together.” This begins first with husbands and wives praying with one another, and then praying with their children. Praying at meal times, before making major decisions, or at bedtime with your children and then later with one another are all possibilities for going before God to lift up your hearts to him.
4. A fourth practical way is to *learn more about your faith*. We are blessed in the Archdiocese of Denver with many parish and diocesan programs such as Marriage Encounter, “That Man is You,” Endow, The Catholic Biblical School, The Catechetical School, Families of Character, and The Augustine Institute, just to name a few.
5. Finally, it is important to *give witness* to the good news of family life in the public square.

Aquila’s practical suggestions indicate a revival of patristic teachings on the family as the domestic church. His advice to families to pray together and read Scripture at home, is of course a revival and application of Chrysostom’s rich teaching, “where we find psalmody, prayer, and the inspired songs of the prophets, there is certainly no mistake in calling such a gathering a church.”³¹⁰ Sacraments, prayer, and the reading of Sacred Scripture, are the necessary ingredients in enabling the family to live out its mission as the domestic church.

Archbishop Aquila’s pastoral letter evidently captures the spirit of Pope John Paul II. His unrelenting encouragement to families to live out their mission, combined with his pastoral care and suggestions for the ways families can live out that mission, certainly reflects a continuity with the teachings of Pope John Paul II. What truly refreshes the essence of John Paul II’s work, is his frequent reminder to readers that ‘the family is called to greatness.’ Archbishop Aquila is a fine example of the way in which magisterial teachings on marriage and family need not be changed to reflect secularist values, but can be reiterated in a pastoral way that reminds families of their vocation, whilst providing practical means in living out that vocation, and ultimately encourage them to rise to greatness.

4.3. Application of the Magisterial Teachings on a Parish Level

Although catechetical instruction ought to be primarily undertaken by families, this can be a daunting prospect for parents who have no training in educating children, especially in matters of faith. Translating magisterial teachings of the family into a parish setting particularly in schools and homes, poses quite a challenge. Catholic schools connected with their local

³¹⁰ Chrysostom, Exp. In Ps 41:2. PG 55, p158, cited in Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, footnote 11, 41.

parishes, are intended to be hubs of catechetical instruction, supporting families in their educative role. Thus, we will examine the way in which such schools promote the Church's teaching, and review examples of additional programs that are intended to support families in their educative mission.

4.3.1. Parish Schools

Catholic schools are often promoted as partners with parents in the Church's educational mission.³¹¹ Depending on the structures of different dioceses, and under the governance of local parish priests, these schools are intended to provide local catholic families with the support they need to transmit the faith to children. Some organisations pride themselves on promoting "the faith development of students in an environment where prayer and sacramental celebrations are structured into the school's day-to-day activities."³¹² However further investigation suggests that this vision is not actually reflected in all diocesan schools.

In an attempt to improve their Catholic identity, several dioceses have introduced a project across their primary and high schools known as Enhancing Catholic School Identity (ECSI). The project aims to "encourage students to see, understand and feel how religious people can feel and break open the hermeneutical space in words, stories, prayers and rituals."³¹³ Professor Didier Pollefeyt, the author of this project, states the aims of ECSI:

AIM 1. Making pupils receptive to religious questions.

AIM 2. Becoming aware of the plural voices in society and among the students.

AIM 3. Giving testimony to and presenting the richness of the Catholic tradition.

AIM 4. Inviting and supporting students to grow in religious self-understanding.³¹⁴

Pollefeyt seems to disregard the Magisterium's clear aim that Catholic schools bear the responsibility of "diligently caring for the moral and religious education of all her children..."

³¹¹ GE, sec. 8: "Let them [schools] work as partners with parents and together with them in every phase of education give due consideration to the difference of sex and the proper ends Divine Providence assigns to each sex in the family and in society."

³¹² "Our Schools," Catholic Education Melbourne, accessed August 06, 2020, <https://www.cem.edu.au/Our-Schools.aspx>

³¹³ "Faith as Walking on Water. The Post Critical Belief Scale," Didier Pollefeyt on Catholic Education Melbourne, accessed August 06, 2020, http://www.cecv.catholic.edu.au/getmedia/9f6d29b0-267c-4a4c-850c-3500a6413c58/ISS_290513_Lecture_1_Part_1_Faith_as_walking_on_water.aspx

³¹⁴ Ibid.

and teach “the doctrine of salvation in a way suited to their age and circumstances and provide spiritual aid in every way the times and conditions allow.”³¹⁵ For Pollefeyt, teaching Catholic identity in Catholic schools is about encouraging religious questioning, and exposing children to a plurality of voices and self-understandings. Such an approach yields much ground to the subjectivism, individualism, and relativism of the surrounding secularised culture. Also revealed is a stark methodological disparity between systemic educational pedagogy and what *Gravissimum Educationis* lays down as necessary for Catholic schools. In the aims of the ECSI project, there is no mention of moral and religious formation, nor is there discussion of the importance of teaching children the doctrine of salvation and our eternal destiny, and a way of life that practices salvation.

The absence of any explicit aim of imparting catechetical or moral formation, or of supporting the role of parents in transmitting the faith, raises serious questions about the ECSI project. Baptism and communion with the Catholic Church is no longer a requirement for enrolment in a Catholic school, nor of the teachers, and most remarkably, not even of teachers who teach religious education; they are merely asked to support the ethos of the schools. This is problematic, for it seems to conflict with the stipulation in *Gravissimum Educationis*:

But let teachers recognize that the Catholic school depends upon them almost entirely for the accomplishment of its goals and programs. They should therefore be very carefully prepared so that both in secular and religious knowledge they are equipped with suitable qualifications and also with a pedagogical skill that is in keeping with the findings of the contemporary world... may teachers by their life as much as by their instruction bear witness to Christ, the unique Teacher. Let them work as partners with parents and together with them in every phase of education.³¹⁶

If teachers themselves are not practising the faith that they are commissioned to impart to their students, and if few parents mount to the heights of attending Mass on Sundays, it should come as no surprise that children can emerge from thirteen years of ‘Catholic’ schooling knowing little or nothing of their baptismal faith, and with even less of a commitment to it. In the same way that parents are called to be witnesses and examples to their children, so too are the teachers in our schools meant to transmit the faith through living witness. But as things are, the presence of living witness and the power of conviction is largely absent in the current educational setting. This lack is certainly not an issue that is being addressed. This is a seriously

³¹⁵ GE, sec. 7.

³¹⁶ GE, sec. 8.

grave problem in our schools, for it does not reflect the proposals of *Gravissimum Educationis* and, consequently, this yawning credibility gap does nothing for the transmission of faith in general and in the family. In fact, it begs the question: ‘Are Catholic schools truly working in partnership with parents so as to faithfully transmit the faith to children?’

It seems that Catholic schools are not fulfilling the mission entrusted to them by the Church; are not fulfilling their fundamental rationale. As the spiritual fathers of their dioceses, bishops are responsible for the catholic schools entrusted to their care. This devolves upon them the responsibility of ensuring harmony between the Magisterium and the pedagogy being implemented in their schools. Any divergence between the two is a reflection upon the concern of the bishop for the catechesis of children and the support of families. Bishops must courageously own their responsibility for schools, as we saw that Archbishop Aquila has, if families are to be adequately formed in transmitting the faith to their children.

The conciliar and post-conciliar Magisterium, along with non-magisterial initiatives have offered many suggestions and solutions for addressing this current situation. Two outstanding examples that illustrate the way in which magisterial teachings can be translated onto the parish level, and support families in their educative role, are seen in the work of Gerard O’Shea and Joseph Atkinson. Both men are lay specialists, who have developed programs for helping parents catechise their children. Their contributions are fine examples of how families can be supported in their educative roles. By comparison with these programs, the catechetical program in some schools leaves much to be desired. If effective catechesis of children is to be fostered, more programs like those of O’Shea and Atkinson need to be encouraged, while dissonances in the pedagogy in some Catholic schools needs to be addressed and resolved.

4.3.2. Gerard O’Shea

In contrast with Catholic Education Melbourne, Dr Gerard O’Shea of the John Paul II Institute, Melbourne session, to whom we now turn our attention, has devised a resource to support parents in their educative role. Entitled ‘*As I have Loved You*,’³¹⁷ this resource was specifically created to address the guidelines pertaining to educating in human sexuality, as outlined in the magisterial document *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* (1995), and so provide parents with the support and practical advice needed to teach their children.

³¹⁷ Gerard O’Shea, *As I Have Loved You*. (Modotti Press: Australia, 2011.)

Edmund Adamus, reviewing the program in *L'Osservatore Romano* [November 23, 2011], wrote: “For countless decades, Catholic parents have appropriated the habit of delegating their un-renounceable and irreplaceable educative role to the Catholic school, and then largely forgetting about it.”³¹⁸ O’Shea’s book, however, puts the baton back in the hands of the parents, whilst also providing empowering support to parents in transmitting the faith to their children and therefore fulfilling their mission as the domestic church. O’Shea presents the material of the book in the context of a 60-minute parent meeting. This allows opportunities for parents to ask questions and seek advice. But there is another benefit to this style of presentation; it provides an opportunity for parents to meet other parents. This was a suggestion made in *Familiars Consortio* and is somewhat incarnated in the presentation conducted by O’Shea.³¹⁹ This resource is a fine example of the way in which lay specialists can support families in their educative mission.

4.3.3. Joseph Atkinson

Joseph Atkinson’s program entitled *Biblical Vision of the Family* is a thirteen-part series, including a guidebook and DVD for parents.³²⁰ In his introduction he astutely identifies the problems faced by families today, stating that “we no longer are sure what the purpose and meaning of the family is. We have lost the vision of what it is to be a family.”³²¹ Atkinson’s program is an attempt to revive the meaning and purpose of the biblical vision of the family, and enable parents to fulfil the mission they are called to.

Beginning with an anthropological foundation, Atkinson’s program is structured in such a way that it gradually builds knowledge of the biblical mission of the family. Each seminar has tasks that require work in small groups, thus allowing parents to engage with other parents. A

³¹⁸ Edmund P Adamus, “Supporting Parents, the primary educators and protectors of their children,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, November 23 (2011) <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=9802>

³¹⁹ Although O’Shea’s presentation is not family-based, it still provides *an opportunity ‘to foster among the faithful a lively sense of solidarity...’ as suggested in FC sec. 72:*

“It is similarly desirable that, with a lively sense of the common good, Christian families should become actively engaged, at every level, in other non-ecclesial associations as well. Some of these associations work for the preservation, transmission and protection of the wholesome ethical and cultural values of each people, the development of the human person, the medical, juridical and social protection of mothers and young children, the just advancement of women and the struggle against all that is detrimental to their dignity, the increase of mutual solidarity, knowledge of the problems connected with the responsible regulation of fertility in accordance with natural methods that are in conformity with human dignity and the teaching of the Church.”

³²⁰ Joseph C. Atkinson, *Biblical Vision of the Family – The Domestic Church - A Companion Guidebook* (Clinton Corners: New York, 2011).

³²¹ Atkinson, *Biblical Vision of the Family – The Domestic Church*, 3.

guidebook is provided to participants, including prompts for prayer and methods for bringing prayer into the home. Another positive feature is the inclusion of daily scripture verses that the participants read between sessions. This allows them the opportunity to become familiar with sacred scripture, which parents can then transmit to their children.

Atkinson recognises that most parents have a deficient understanding of their mission. His course directly addresses this situation by helping parents to further understand, and be empowered in, their mission of transmitting the faith. It provides the support that parents need in bringing prayer and Scripture into their home, particularly if it is something new or foreign to their family. It is an outstanding course; one that certainly addresses the needs of families as well as the Church.

O’Shea and Atkinson, both lay specialists, have taken up Pope John Paul II’s invitation in *Familiaris Consortio*, fulfilling their mission in support of families as the domestic church.³²² Their programs offer considerable help and contribution to the needs of the family. Atkinson and O’Shea provide the advice and support that parents need to catechise their children themselves and so live out their mission within their own families.

4.4 Pastoral Care for the Domestic Church Marriages

Well aware of the challenges families may encounter, John Paul II urged pastors to provide pastoral support for families and married couples to faithfully live out their vocation. In *Familiaris Consortio* he dedicated an entire section to the pastoral care of the family and what ought to be done to support them: “Every effort should be made to strengthen and develop pastoral care for the family, which should be treated as a real matter of priority, in the certainty that the future evangelisation depends largely on the domestic church.”³²³ The pastoral care that Pope John Paul II suggested can be grouped into three categories; preparation for marriage, pastoral care after marriage, and pastoral care within the parish.

³²² FC, sec. 75: “Considerable help can be given to families by lay specialists (doctors, lawyers, psychologists, social workers, consultants, etc.) who either as individuals or as members of various associations and undertakings offer their contribution of enlightenment, advice, orientation and support. To these people one can well apply the exhortations that I had the occasion to address to the Confederation of Family Advisory Bureaus of Christian Inspiration: “Yours is a commitment that well deserves the title of mission, so noble are the aims that it pursues, and so determining, for the good of society and the Christian community itself, are the results that derive from it...”

³²³ FC, sec. 65.

4.4.1. Pastoral Care in Preparation for Marriage

The first category of pastoral care for the family on both a diocesan and parish level is Pre-Marriage preparation. Arguing for the necessity of marriage preparation Pope John Paul II stated, “This renewed catechesis of young people and others preparing for Christian marriage is absolutely necessary in order that the sacrament may be celebrated and lived with the right moral and spiritual dispositions.”³²⁴ Furthermore he adds, “this preparation is not only necessary in every case, but is also more urgently needed for engaged couples that still manifest shortcomings or difficulties in Christian doctrine and practice.”³²⁵

While this advice was accepted and implemented by the Pontifical Council for the Family in the document *Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage*, it has not been well implemented on a local level. Although there are Pre-Marriage preparation courses in various dioceses, such as Melbourne, they are not compulsory, nor are they well supported or promoted. Rather, these courses are entirely optional and are left to the discretion of priests. Whereas for Pope John Paul II the need for this has not been well received on a local level.

4.4.2. Pastoral Care After Marriage

To provide further pastoral care for the family, John Paul II adds that it is necessary to continue support for couples *after* marriage. John Paul II writes, “within the ecclesial community – the great family made up of Christian families – there will take place a mutual exchange of presence and help among all the families, each one putting at the service of others its own experience of life, as well as the gifts of faith and grace.”³²⁶ Pastoral care of the family is of utmost importance. What he envisaged was families or couples assisting other families and couples in the Church. He calls this “*assistance from family to family...*”³²⁷ It was John Paul II’s hope that families would not only limit themselves to receiving support, but in turn become beacons of hope for other families: “Young families will not limit themselves merely to receiving, but in their turn, having been helped this way, become a source of enrichment for other longer established families, through their witness of life and practical contribution.”³²⁸ John Paul II provided a splendid example of the way in which the virtue of charity, the epitome

³²⁴ FC, sec. 66.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid. 69.

³²⁷ Ibid. 69.

³²⁸ Ibid. 69.

of Christian living, ought to be incorporated into pastoral care for families. It was an innovative idea, one that would provide a source of support for couples and families. While this may have been a marvellous idea, there seems to be a marked absence of such groups in our parishes. Pastoral support groups to families by families is evidently absent from parish life.

4.4.3. Pastoral Care Within the Parish

The third recommendation for pastoral support was the establishment of associations of families for families. Building on the previous suggestion, John Paul II envisaged associations of families, stating: “It will be their task to foster among the faithful a lively sense of solidarity, to favour a manner of living, inspired by the Gospel and by the faith of the Church, to form consciences according to Christian values and not according to the standards of public opinion...”³²⁹

The establishment of family associations has been moderately successful since the publication of *Familiaris Consortio*. The international movement known as the National Association of Catholic Families (N.A.C.F.) is one example of such an association being established to promote the pastoral care of the family. Established in the United Kingdom, it has now developed branches of the N.A.C.F. in other countries including Australia, the United States and India. The Association provides families with opportunities to engage with other families, opportunities which enable parents to form friendships with other parents and find support from others within the Church. In Australia, the N.A.C.F. conducts yearly camps and excursions when families can meet, children can interact, and parents can listen to various speakers, such as priests, bishops, and lay specialists, discuss a wide variety of topics related to marriage and family life. Such groups as the N.A.C.F. reflect John Paul II’s desire to see associations for families by families, available to support each other in their mission as the domestic church.

4.5 The Gap between Doctrine and Application

Throughout his pontificate John Paul II’s teaching on Marriage and Family received extraordinary resurgence on a topic that had been lying dormant since the Church Father’s, with a recovery during the Second Vatican Council. *Familiaris Consortio*, the manifesto for the domestic church, provided a wealth of teachings on the mission of the family, as well as practical ways in which the family ought to live out its mission.

³²⁹ FC, sec. 72.

Looking back now with the perspective of some decades, we are forced to admit that local reception and implementation of John Paul II's efforts to foster pastoral care of the family has been modestly successful at best. Some of the more successful endeavours have been the establishment of several Pontifical Institutes for Studies in Marriage and Family,³³⁰ the development of diocesan marriage preparation courses, training of lay support specialists and the establishment of Associations for Catholic Families. Nevertheless, there remains a disparity between the rich post-conciliar doctrine on the family and its local implementation.

Although Archbishop Aquila provides a fine example of the way in which bishops can support families through attention to courses in Catholic High schools, compulsory pre-marriage programs, and pastoral letters, whilst others work in ways that seem diametrically opposite, supporting trends to secularising accommodation and attenuating the Church's teaching on marriage in the process.

In some instances, in parochial schools, the lack of support given to parents in the education of faith in children is another example of disparity between doctrine and application. The receptivity and application of John Paul II's teaching of the family is perhaps best described as being having been frustrated. While there have been some steps in the right direction, there is still much that needs to be implemented if the Church is to properly support families in their mission as the domestic church. Further developments still need to be made to ensure families are supported in their mission as the domestic church.

Just as the family was central to the transmission of faith in the Old Testament, so too does the Christian family remain vital for the future of the faith. If the family is recognised as the 'church in the domestic sphere,' then it needs to be considered in terms of ecclesiology, and then perhaps it will be treated as an unbreakable entity, responsible for the transmission of faith to its children.

Pope John Paul II famously stated, "the future of humanity passes by way of the family."³³¹ Paraphrasing this, I will endeavour to argue that the future of the Church passes by way of the family. Thus, the final chapter will explore the future directions of the *Ressourcement* of the teaching of the family as the domestic church. The chapter will examine the nature and mission

³³⁰ Several campuses of the John Paul II Institute have been established worldwide, including Italy, The United States of America, Brazil, India, Mexico, Spain, Lebanon and The Philippines.

³³¹ FC, sec. 86.

of the family in terms of Trinitarian-Christocentric anthropology, and how this understanding can enable parents and families to realise their role as the domestic church.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FUTURE OF THE DOMESTIC CHURCH

Do the Magisterial and theological claims concerning the family's ecclesial character rest on a real theological foundation, or are we dealing merely with generous pastoral rhetoric lacking any sufficient conceptual basis?³³²

This final chapter will investigate the current theological status of the family, the future directions of this *Ressourcement*, and how the teaching of the family as domestic church ought to develop from Trinitarian image to ecclesial reality. Divided into three parts, this chapter will begin with a critique of the current theological standpoint of the domestic church, referring primarily to the theology of Augustine, Pope John Paul II, and Cardinal Marc Ouellet. The following section will then propose future theological directions as well as practical applications for a theology of the family. The final part of this chapter will suggest potential ways forward for the development of a theology of the domestic church, raising questions that have arisen throughout the course of this research. The aim of this chapter is to ultimately suggest future directions for remedying contemporary difficulties and to propose a way in which families can be supported in understanding their *raison d'être* and thus make of their homes a 'little church.'

5.1 The Current Theological Standpoint of the Family

Pope John Paul II's teaching on the family initiated a new era in the Church's theological understanding of the nature and mission of the family. In the trajectory of the role of the family as the vehicle for transmitting faith, this era paved the way for a fifth wave in theological and anthropological developments of the Church's teaching on family as the domestic church. Efforts to further this theology have been led by scholars from the John Paul II Institute, namely Cardinal Marc Ouellet. Ouellet's theology is remarkable for the fact that he offers both an analogical and katalogical understanding of the family. As he himself states, this method offers a path forward that goes beyond the limits of the Church's understanding of the family.

Ouellet proposes a Trinitarian and Christocentric anthropology that underpins the theology of the family. There is a fundamental connection between the family and the Trinity for they are

³³² Ouellet, *Mystery and Sacrament of Love*, 174.

closely related, both teaching us something about each other. The family is also Christocentric, with Christ Jesus becoming the link between the family and the Trinity so that they no longer are separate entities but are intimately related with Christ as the bridge. What will be discussed and developed is how in the order of creation, the connection between the Trinity and the family already exists, and how through Christ the family can properly live out that connection. Ouellet's theology is fundamental to our current understanding of the theology of the family; nevertheless, his theology is rooted in the work of Saint Augustine. Therefore, we begin this current discussion by first examining the writings of Augustine on the topic of the family as an image of the Trinity.

5.1.1. Augustine's Theology of the Family

In *De Trinitate*, Augustine searches for a suitable image to better understand the Trinitarian God. Ouellet explains that Augustine's contemporaries pointed to the human family of man, woman, child as analogous to the Trinity.³³³ Yet this view was not entirely accepted by Augustine, who was concerned that this analogy could be misleading:

Accordingly they do not seem to me to advance a probable opinion, who lay it down that a trinity of the image of God in three persons, so far as regards human nature, can so be discovered as to be completed in the marriage of male and female and in their offspring...³³⁴

Reluctant to accept the position that man, woman, child image the Trinity, Augustine argues such an analogy would lend itself to misconceptions:

[T]he man himself, as it were, indicates the person of the Father, but that which has so proceeded from him as to be born, that of the Son; and so the third person as of the Spirit, is, they say, the woman, who has so proceeded from the man as not herself to be either son or daughter, although it was by her conception that the offspring was born.³³⁵

The problem for Augustine is that of procession (*exproeisis*).³³⁶ He takes issue with the fact that the woman, who is likened to the Spirit, proceeds from the man, yet her child proceeds

³³³ Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, 20.

³³⁴ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Book XII, Ch V, trans. Arthur West Haddan. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 3. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/130112.htm>, (hereafter cited as Augustine, *De Trinitate*).

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ The family analogy, which Augustine refutes, is found in the Fifth Theological Discourse of Gregory of Nazianzen. Nazianzen proposes the family as an analogy of the Trinity, but this is the very idea that Augustine takes issue with. For further reading see Gregory of Nazianzen, *Oratio XXXI (Theol. V)*, *Patrologica Graeca* 36, p. 144.

from her. Augustine argues, “For I pass over such a thing, as to think the Holy Spirit to be the mother of the Son of God, and the wife of the Father.” Augustine suggests that pushing this analogy too far in trying to directly link three persons in a family to the three persons of the Trinity can lead to false conclusions concerning the Trinity. According to Ouellet, ‘Augustine’s major objection to this analogy is the impossibility of realizing a true unity, that is to say substantial unity, within a human family; in the three human hypostases of man, woman, and child there exists such a disparity that any real unity is inconceivable.’³³⁷ What Augustine deems problematic is the inner unity of the distinct persons in a family and how each person then images a person of the Trinity. He cannot reconcile confining the Trinity-Family analogy to a comparison between the persons.

As insightful as Augustine’s concerns may be, they nevertheless neglect the very basis on which the family serves as an analogy for the Trinity, namely, the relationality of persons. Ouellet explains that “Augustine cannot conceive of a valid analogy unless it be a trinity of terms distinct from one another and yet forming a true unity.”³³⁸ He argues, “sometimes Augustine makes of the person an absolute which excludes any idea of relativity, sometimes he makes of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit pure relatives which exclude any idea of subsistence.”³³⁹ These reservations cause Augustine to avoid using the family as an analogy for the Trinity; nevertheless, he does propose an insightful alternative.

Despite his misgivings, Augustine opens up a possible path forward for the analogy of the family and Trinity. He proposes ‘love’ and its innate relational structure, rather than the family, as an alternate analogue to the Trinity. He writes: “But love comes from one who loves, and by love something is loved. Here then are three things: one who loves, that which is loved, and love itself.”³⁴⁰ The identification of three relational dimensions within human love is theologically ground-breaking. Unfortunately, however, Augustine “ends his development here.”³⁴¹ He does not seem to notice any possible connections between his analysis of love and the use of the family as an analogy to the Trinity, an oversight that should be of significant interest.³⁴² Augustine’s overly static understanding of the Trinitarian persons leads him to

³³⁷ Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, 22.

³³⁸ *Ibid*, 23.

³³⁹ *Ibid*, 23

³⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 23, refer to footnote 11.

³⁴¹ Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, 23.

³⁴² One cannot but wonder why Augustine overlooks a connection between the family and love. Could it be that his own experience of family life, so well documented in his Confessions, blinded him to the possibility? Or could it be that the connection between family and love was simply not a cultural reality in his time?

overlook the possibility that ‘love’ could serve as the ground for the analogy between the family and the Trinity. By remaining at the level of an analogy of number, he overlooks the possibility of an analogy of relation.

Pope Francis’ Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* explores this idea further. Although it does not directly refer to the writings of Augustine, it certainly asserts the argument that the family serves as a living icon, or rather an image, of the Trinity. Francis writes, “the couple that loves and begets life is a true, living icon – not an idol like those of stone or gold prohibited by the Decalogue – capable or revealing God the Creator and Saviour.”³⁴³ He adds that it is “fruitful love” which becomes a “symbol of God’s inner life.”³⁴⁴ Where Augustine ceased his argument, Pope Francis took up the notion of fruitful love as the bridge connecting the spouses to ultimately image the Trinity. He proceeds to explain this further, “seen this way, the couple’s fruitful relationship becomes an image for understanding and describing the mystery of God himself, for in the Christian vision of the Trinity, God is contemplated as Father, Son and Spirit of love. The triune God is a communion of love, and the family is its living reflection.”³⁴⁵ In no uncertain terms, Pope Francis argues that the family, through its communion of love, provides an image of the Trinity. What Augustine alluded to in his familial analogy of the Trinity, Ouellet, John Paul II, and Pope Francis, have begun to develop in their writings on the family.

Augustine’s theology of love is a possible catalyst for the recovery of the family as an analogy of the Trinity. As Ouellet explains, St. Bonaventure takes up Augustine’s work and “calls upon the family experience where love between husband and wife finds its personalised expression in the child. The child is in some way the communion of the spouses incarnated in a third person.”³⁴⁶ Herein Augustine’s theology of love, which will be further developed by Ouellet in his reading of the work of Pope John Paul II, is perhaps a lens through which the family can be more fully understood as an image of the Trinity.

³⁴³ Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Vatican Website, March 19, 2016, https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf, Sn 11, (hereafter cited as AL).

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, 25.

5.1.2. John Paul II's Theology of the Family

John Paul II inspired a profound renewal in understanding the modern ecclesial role of the family. In particular, this renewal sharpened the Church's appreciation of the family as an image of the Trinity. This theological breakthrough in his theology sought to look beyond individualistic norms that were so prevalent at the time, and instead usher in a new way through which we could look to the family as a lens to the Trinity, namely the way in which they relate to one another; the *communio personarum*. The two underlying principles that permeate throughout his theology of the family are: *communio personarum* and *fruitful love*. It is through these principles that he derives the nature and mission of the family.

John Paul II understood that the 'unity of the two' which is a sign of interpersonal communion, shows that the creation of man is also marked by a certain likeness to the divine communion ("*communio*"). This likeness is a quality of the personal being of both man and woman and is also a call and a task.³⁴⁷ He explored this divine likeness throughout his papacy in several documents, namely *Mulieris Dignitatem*, *Gratissimam Sane* and, most notably, the Theology of the Body. John Paul II's writings on the family are saturated with the idea that relationality, expressed in the communion of persons, is the way the family images the Trinity.

In *Mulieris Dignitatem* John Paul II argues that the creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God is in fact the "basis of all Christian anthropology."³⁴⁸ Reflecting then on the unity of the two, as recorded in Genesis,³⁴⁹ he highlights that:

[M]an cannot exist "alone" (cf. Gen 2:18); he can exist only as a 'unity of the two,' and therefore in relation to another human person. It is a question here of a mutual relationship: man to woman and woman to man. Being a person in the image and likeness of God thus also involves existing in a relationship, in relation to the other 'I.' This is a prelude to the definitive self-revelation of the Triune God: a living unity in the communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.³⁵⁰

The man-woman relationship, and indeed the husband-wife relationship, becomes the starting point for understanding the unity of persons within the Trinity as well as their relationality. Further developing these ideas in his *Letter to Families*, John Paul II explains how this man-

³⁴⁷ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, Apostolic Letter on the Dignity and Vocation of Women, Vatican Website, August 15, 1988, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19880815_mulieris-dignitatem.html, sec. 7. (hereafter cited as MD).

³⁴⁸ MD, sec. 6.

³⁴⁹ Gen 2:18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

³⁵⁰ MD, sec. 7.

woman relationship, united in the sacramental bond of Matrimony, becomes an expression of dual unity. He explains:

When they are united by the conjugal covenant in such a way as to become ‘one flesh’ (Gen 2:24), their union ought to take place ‘in truth and love,’ and thus express the maturity proper to persons created in the image and likeness of God.³⁵¹

John Paul II highlights how the Sacrament of Marriage makes visible an invisible reality. The one-flesh union of man and woman points to the one-substance union of the Triune persons. This analogy between spousal union and Trinitarian union is not so much based on number as it is on relationality.

John Paul II looks to the conjugal couple as an image of the one-flesh union espoused in the trinity. He uses a concretely human expression to provide a glimpse into understanding the divine union. In fact, Ouellet argues that “one of the most representative themes in the pope’s philosophical and theological anthropology was his reflection on the man-woman relationship as an expression of the ontological principle of dual unity.”³⁵² What John Paul II saw in the communion of the wedded couple was a human sign of a divine reality, a starting point for human knowledge of the trinity. Then in *Gratissimam Sane*, John Paul II put forth the idea that human fatherhood and motherhood “contain in an essential way a ‘likeness’ to God which is the basis of the family as a community of human life, as a community of persons united in love (*communio personarum*).”³⁵³ The family, which results from this union, offers us something further to understand about that trinity, namely its *modus operandi*; *love*. This idea is rather reminiscent of Augustine’s work in *De Trinitate*, reflecting the notion of human love as trinitarian analogy.

Perhaps the most notable work of John Paul II is his five-year long catechesis, which is commonly known as the Theology of the Body. For many his rich teachings provided a new dimension to understanding the gift of sexuality and its implications on relationships. However, in the early stages of his catechesis, he reveals an important point for our discussion on the family as an analogy of the Trinity. He states,

If, vice versa, we wish to draw also from the narrative of the Yahwist text the concept of "image of God," we can then deduce that man became the "image and likeness" of God not only through his own humanity, but also through the

³⁵¹ GrS, sec. 8.

³⁵² Ouellet, *Marriage and Sacramentality*, 121.

³⁵³ GrS, sec. 6.

communion of persons which man and woman form right from the beginning. The function of the image is to reflect the one who is the model, to reproduce its own prototype. Man becomes the image of God not so much in the moment of solitude as in the moment of communion. Right "from the beginning," he is not only an image in which the solitude of a person who rules the world is reflected, but also, and essentially, an image of an inscrutable divine communion of persons.³⁵⁴

Here again we read in John Paul II's theology, that when man is living in a communion of persons, he becomes the image of God. Suffice to say that although there are always limits of analogy, the family, or rather the communion of persons, is an anthropological basis for understanding the Trinity. The key point of this analogy is that John Paul II uses 'relationality' exhibited in the family to create an analogical bridge between theological anthropology and Trinitarian theology. Where Augustine encountered a problem in the analogy of number, John Paul II instead proposed the analogy of relationality, namely a *communio personarum*.

The family is not merely an image of the trinity because of what they are, but also because of what they do. It is in being (that is, a dual unity) as well as acting, that the family provides an earthly image of the trinity, namely through loving. Hans Urs von Balthasar explores this relational love between the couple, arguing that on an anthropological level human love can point to a divine reality. He states, "this objective element that even inspires their common love can be called either the spirit of the loving covenant or the covenant itself as the institution transcending them both."³⁵⁵ This transcendental love that yields from the couple is akin to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity that pours fourth from the love between the Father and the Son. Balthasar develops this idea further, linking the transcendent love between spouses and the procreation of children when he writes, "The personal and free character of this objective *tertium quid* will, once more, be demonstrated by the possible bodily fruit of the union, the child, who is more than the sum of its parents' marriage but is the unforeseen product of their transcendental hope."³⁵⁶ What Balthasar highlights is how the bond of the couple and their mission to love and procreate is indeed another way in which the family can serve as the anthropological image for deepening our understanding of the nature and mission of the trinity.

³⁵⁴ John Paul II, *Man and Woman: He Created Them. A Theology of the Body*. (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006) Wednesday Audience, 14 November, 1979, 161.

³⁵⁵ Ouellet, *Marriage and Sacramentality*, 182.

³⁵⁶ Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology*, vol. 4: Spirit and Institution, 222 in Ouellet, *Mystery and Sacrament of Love*, pg 182

The work of John Paul II illustrates how both the nature and mission, or the *communio personarum* and fruitful love, of the family serves as an earthly image of a divine reality.

5.1.3. Ouellet's Theology of the Family

Following on from the work of Pope John Paul II, Cardinal Ouellet picks up on the idea of the family as a trinitarian image. He understands the unique way that the family can offer an “anthropological starting point for human knowledge of the Trinity, a revealed starting point which allows theology to deepen the mystery of God as love from the perspective of human experience.”³⁵⁷ What adds a unique dimension to Ouellet's argument is that he takes the family's trinitarian anthropology a step further and argues for its place in ecclesiology, that is, he maintains that the family is not merely an image of the Trinity but an ecclesial reality.³⁵⁸

In writing about the family as analogical to the Trinity, he states that “despite the immeasurable distance between the divine and the human, there exists sufficient likeness between the image and its divine Model...”³⁵⁹ The family, according to Ouellet, has great value in providing an anthropological means for deepening our understanding of the trinity. In its spousal unity and loving fecundity, the Christian family is indeed a trinitarian icon.

Reiterating the words of John Paul II's *Mulieris Dignitatem*, Ouellet prefaces his argument by acknowledging the limits of analogy: “all resemblance between the Creator and his creature is limited by an always-greater dissimilarity.”³⁶⁰ This principle must always be considered when using analogy to understand a mystery as infinite as the Trinity. Building on John Paul II's idea of the family as a communion of persons, Ouellet also understands that the fundamental characteristic that likens the family to the Trinity is that of the *communio personarum*. From this anthropological starting point, Ouellet argues that the “fruitful couple’ reflects and makes present the communion and distinction of the divine Persons.”³⁶¹ Referring to Lionel Gendron³⁶², Ouellet asserts the value of the fruitful couple as an image of the Trinity when he states, “the couple proclaims that the loving communion of two of the baptized is a revelation

³⁵⁷ Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, 34.

³⁵⁸ Ibid, 42.

³⁵⁹ Ibid, 35.

³⁶⁰ MD sec. 8, in Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, 33: “This is a perennial principle of the way analogy is used in Catholic Theology, as demonstrated by St Thomas Aquinas...”

³⁶¹ Ouellet, *Mystery and Sacrament*, 176.

³⁶² Lionel Gendron is a specialist on the topic of the human family analogy to the Trinity. Ouellet frequently refers to his work particularly when developing his anthropology on the family.

and a fruitful realization of the eternal communion of the Father and the Son in the Spirit.”³⁶³ He goes so far as to argue that the couple’s “participation in the communion of the Trinity is without a doubt the ultimate foundation of the family understood as an ecclesial reality.”³⁶⁴ The earthly communion of persons, which we see in marriage and subsequently in the family, provides a deeper insight to the divine communion of persons; the Trinity.

Thus far the theology of the family has been explained via analogy, that is, we look to the nature of the family and compare it to that of the Trinity. An anthropological starting point enables us to look to sensible things for clues to deepen our understanding of divine realities. Ouellet builds on analogy whilst offering another perspective to deepen our appreciation of the family, namely via *katalogy*. He explains:

Catholic theology has always ascribed a special place to analogy and this is more timely than ever. The analogical process proceeds from the bottom up, beginning with creatures and rising toward God. It presupposes a balance of affirmation and negation in expressing the resemblance and difference between creature and Creator. However, this method does not exhaust all of the possibilities for expressing the relations between God and his creatures. There is a complementary procedure which Hans Urs von Balthasar has described as *katalogical*.³⁶⁵

The method of *katalogy* as compared to analogy, “reverses the perspective and starts from on high to enlighten created realities. What this means, for example, is that instead of proceeding exclusively from the family to the Trinity (analogy), one can proceed also from the Trinity to the family (*katalogy*).”³⁶⁶ Ouellet suggests that just as the family can serve analogically to tell us something about the persons of the Trinity, so too can the Trinity tell us something about the family. He explains that even *Familiaris Consortio* “is no stranger to this *katalogical* approach since it makes explicit God’s plan for marriage and the family, beginning with the Word of God.”³⁶⁷ With this *katalogical* approach, interpreted with the Word as the starting point, Ouellet points out that “the essential question will be not so much: What can the family bring to our grasp of the Trinitarian mystery? But rather: ‘What does the Trinity wish to express through the family in a global context of covenant?’”³⁶⁸

³⁶³Ouellet, *Mystery and Sacrament*, 176.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 176.

³⁶⁵ Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, 14.

³⁶⁶ Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, 15.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

Ouellet explains, a katalogical perspective “helps Christians to understand and to live the deeper meaning of the family reality, beginning with the Trinity as its source and model.”³⁶⁹ What the Trinity is, namely a *communion of persons*, sheds light on what the family ought to become, that is “a sincere and free self-giving of the persons...”³⁷⁰ Taking John Paul II’s Letter to Families as his source, Ouellet states that “Man created in the image and likeness of God can find himself fully only in the unselfish gift of himself.”³⁷¹ The family then, taking its cue from the Trinity, “is the environment in which man can exist for himself by the unselfish gift of himself.”³⁷² It is the interpersonal love within the Trinity that is the *modus operandi* which the family is called to reflect.

Fruitfulness is another dimension from which the family finds its roots in the *imago Dei*. John Paul II states, “Every act of begetting finds its primordial model in the fatherhood of God. When a new person is born of the conjugal union of the two, he brings with him into the world a particular image and likeness of God himself: the genealogy of the person is inscribed in the very biology of generation.”³⁷³ Ouellet explains how this fecundity finds its prototype in the Trinity. He writes,

[T]he fundamental anthropological meaning of Gen 1:27, interpreted along with Gen 2:18ff, is the establishment of a partnership, man-woman, blessed by fecundity at the heart of their communion, so that creation in the image of God may serve as the basis for the common fecundity between God and man. By the mutual gift of man and woman, which alleviates man’s original solitude, the living God and source of life gives fecundity to their union and joins them to himself in the very transmission of the image of God to other human persons.³⁷⁴

In its fruitfulness the divine model is reflected in the human family, whereby a “community of mutual gift joins the Creator and his creature in transmitting life.”³⁷⁵ The life-giving Trinity directs us to understand the nature and mission of the fecundity in the family. The interpersonal love between the persons of the Trinity as well as the fruitfulness that is born from communion is an example of how a katalogical method, directed from revealed divine truths to created realities, can enable us to more richly understand the way in which the family is an icon of the Trinity. As John Paul II beautifully expressed, “the primordial model of the family is to be

³⁶⁹ Ibid, 35.

³⁷⁰ Ibid, 35.

³⁷¹ Ibid, 35, citing LF 13.

³⁷² Ibid, 35.

³⁷³ GrS, sec. 9.

³⁷⁴ Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, 35.

³⁷⁵ Ibid, 35.

sought in God himself, in the Trinitarian mystery of his life. The divine ‘We’ is the eternal pattern of the human ‘we’, especially of that ‘we’ formed by the man and the woman created in the divine image and likeness.”³⁷⁶

The development of a theology of the family has a two-fold purpose; it deepens our understanding of the Trinity, whilst exploring the nature and mission of the domestic church. Ouellet stresses the necessity of both an analogical and katalogical perspective in developing a theology of the family when he writes, “the harmonious integration of the two methods should allow us to go beyond the limits present in the tradition of the familial analogy of the Trinity, a tradition that restricts itself to a rather essentialist approach to resemblances and differences between Trinity and family.”³⁷⁷ Considering the current theological standpoint of the family, what remains now is the question of how this theology can be applied.

5.2. Future Directions for a Theology of the Family

With a rediscovery of the term domestic church in the discussions of the Second Vatican Council, and an effort to develop this concept in the aftermath, there still remains the challenge of unresolved questions in furthering the theology of the family. These challenges have been identified by two prominent academics in the field of Marriage and Family, William May and Joseph Atkinson. What they contribute to this discussion are their concerns about the future theological directions for the family. What follows from this discussion is how these theological directions can potentially be translated into practical applications. This section will delve into the concerns of the unresolved questions, and subsequently make suggestions for the practical application of a theology for the domestic church.

5.2.1. Future Theological Discussions

May and Atkinson highlight several unresolved theological issues concerning the understanding of the family as the domestic church. “The family is, so to speak, the domestic church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children...”³⁷⁸ Firstly, May argues, “This re-introduction by the Fathers of Vatican II of an ancient understanding of the family was done with almost no explanation. The title domestic

³⁷⁶ GrS, sec 6.

³⁷⁷ Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, 15.

³⁷⁸ LG, sec. 11.

church was applied only in an analogous way to the Christian family...³⁷⁹ He proceeds to highlight the magnanimous contributions made by Pope John Paul II in his plight to show that the family's "ecclesial dimension – *its being Church* – is constitutive of its meaning."³⁸⁰ In May's detailed analysis of John Paul II's writings on the family, he recognises that "the family must be understood through the prism of its ecclesial and Christological identity."³⁸¹ It is along these two axes that an identity of the family can be found, and thus begin the discussion for the family's deserved place in theology.

May's interpretation of *Familiaris Consortio* sees a strong emphasis on the family's ecclesial nature and mission. Referring to the bulk of the document, namely from section 17-49, he defines the family's essence and mission as being "to guard, reveal and communicate love, which is further defined by its interior reference to Christ."³⁸² He adds, this mission is: "entrusted to every human family, whether Christian or not, by virtue of its very being as a reality having God as its author, who even prior to his revelation of himself in Christ used the marriage of man and woman and the family based on this union as an image of his loving union with his people."³⁸³ But what distinguishes the Christian family is that it finds its origin, identity and mission in Christ and his bride, the Church. This interior reference to Christ embellishes the family's mission to more than an image of God's union with his people, but an extension of the Church. May explains,

Since the reality of the Christian family derives from its being generated by the Church, the identity of the Christian family is that of a "church in miniature", summoned to imitate and relive the same self-giving and sacrificial love that the Lord Jesus has for the entire human race.... The Christian family thus participates in the very mystery of the Church.³⁸⁴

The family is rooted in marriage by members of Christ's body who, through baptism, are indissolubly one with Christ and the Church. May takes his cue from John Paul II when he argues that "it is because of this indestructible insertion (that is, baptism) that the intimate community of conjugal life and love, founded by the Creator, is elevated and assumed into the spousal charity of Christ."³⁸⁵ Grounded in baptism and sustained by marriage is why May

³⁷⁹ William May, *Marriage: The Rock on which the Family is Built*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2009), 91

³⁸⁰ May, *Marriage: The Rock on which the Family is Built*, 92.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.* 93.

³⁸² *Ibid.* 93.

³⁸³ *Ibid.* 94.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 94.

³⁸⁵ FC, sec. 13.

argues “the deepest identity of the Christian family is that of a Church in miniature.”³⁸⁶ What marriage signifies is the invisible reality of God’s redemptive grace. May reiterates, that marriage not only signifies “the life-giving, love-giving, grace-giving union of Christ with his bride the Church, but also inwardly participates in this union.”³⁸⁷ Thus he concludes once again that the Christian family, living this sacramental reality and making visible the love of Christ, is in truth a Church in miniature.³⁸⁸

The Christological axis through which May begins to delve deeper into the mission of the domestic church, is the second reason for suggesting a more serious reading of the family’s theological grounding. He takes his christological reference from John Paul II once again in suggesting that family has a priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission. May details this threefold mission and thus defends his position of interpreting the rheology of the family through the prism of ecclesiology and Christology.

Joseph Atkinson’s analysis of the theology of the family aligns with May’s argument that the revival of the ancient understanding of the family was done with almost no explanation during Vatican II. He writes, “the reintroduction was done with little or no explanation and, it should be noted, with no developed theological grounding.”³⁸⁹ Atkinson, like May, develops a strong theological basis for the nature and mission of the family in the Church.

In his book, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, Atkinson explains in more detail the ecclesial and christological nature of the family. He embellishes his argument with another dimension of the interpretation of John Paul II’s work, namely the four constitutive aspects of the family. Atkinson highlights the four aspects: “to form a community of persons; to serve life; to participate in the development of society; and to share in the life and mission of the universal Church.”³⁹⁰ He explores the way in which the family embodies these four aspects and thus states, “these are the marks of the Church, and if the family truly shares in the life and nature of the Body of Christ, then it cannot be separated from the Church but must be inserted into her very reality.”³⁹¹

³⁸⁶ May, *Marriage: The Rock on which the Family is Built*, 95.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 96.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 96

³⁸⁹ Joseph C. Atkinson, “Family as Domestic Church: Developmental Trajectory,” *Theological Studies* 66, (2005): 592.

³⁹⁰ Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 317.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.* 317.

Although Atkinson provides an in-depth discussion of the two axes (ecclesial and christological) as well as the four constitutive aspects of the family, he still expresses the concern that “little has been done to open these ideas further.”³⁹² His concern is that although John Paul II provided the “direction this theology should go,” there is still a need to explore it further.³⁹³

Both May and Atkinson provide a strong basis for suggesting the need to further John Paul II’s work and thus develop a theology of the family. However, there remain questions as to why this re-introduced ancient teaching has been left unexplored. Whilst May argues that “the title domestic church was applied only in an analogous way to the Christian family...”³⁹⁴ Atkinson is concerned that “because the term has not been theologically grounded, it is vulnerable to distortion.”³⁹⁵ Consequently his concern is that if a theology is not developed, then the “concept of domestic church may become an empty theological tag, used without any regard for its constitutive theological nature.”³⁹⁶

Whilst there are clear grounds for suggesting an ecclesial identity of the family, as well as a theological foundation, the unanswered question is why the domestic church has not been developed any further? If the family is in fact an important cell in the ecclesial structure of the Church, at its very foundation, then why has the re-introduction of the domestic church been lost in the aftermath of John Paul II’s rich teaching? John Paul II began to sketch out a plan for the family, and a theology of the domestic church, but this patristic term is at risk of becoming dormant once again if it is not given its due attention. The problematic appropriation of the theology of the family is a concern, but perhaps there are ways of ensuring the domestic church is given the attention it deserves and enable families to recognise their mission within the Church.

5.2.2. Future Practical Applications

Although chapter four explored the practical application of the theology of the family, what has become evident is the need to ensure that the family is given its due attention in theology. Throughout its long trajectory, the family has always held the place of transmitting faith to

³⁹² Ibid. 319.

³⁹³ Ibid. 319.

³⁹⁴ May, *Marriage: The Rock on which the Family is Built*, 91.

³⁹⁵ Atkinson, *Biblical & Theological Foundations of the Family*, 320.

³⁹⁶ Atkinson, “Family as Domestic Church: Developmental Trajectory,” 602.

future generations. Now, what has become apparent is the need to ensure that the family is supported in this mission. Perhaps it needs to receive its deserved insertion into ecclesiology to ensure that the domestic church is not merely an empty theological tag, but a foundational cell in the Church. To ensure that the domestic church is not merely relegated to the peripheries of the Church there are perhaps some steps that can be undertaken to safeguard the family's vital role in the transmission of faith. There are several ways that the family can be supported in its ecclesial mission to transmit the faith to future generations:

Recovery of the role of the family in the Old Testament. As discussed in Chapter One, the role of the family was the 'covenant bearer.' Parents undertook to the role of educating their children in the faith to ensure the covenant was passed on to future generations. Atkinson argues for this recovery suggesting, "there first needs to be a recovery of the Old Testament understanding of the family on which the New Testament is understanding is predicated."³⁹⁷ Ouellet agrees with the recovery of the biblical role of the family and suggests that "much remains to be discovered with regard to the dimension of the family in the Bible, and the model of the Holy Family could shed much light on ecclesiology."³⁹⁸

Move beyond using the term domestic church synonymously for the family. Atkinson fervently reminds us that the danger of the term domestic church "can become a concept into which anyone can pour one's own content."³⁹⁹ As noted in the Catechism, "the Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion and for this reason it can and should be called a domestic church."⁴⁰⁰ This then needs to be further developed within the realm of theology so that the family is endowed with the full realisation of its role and mission. Ouellet argues that a systematic analysis of the family's relation to the trinity "contains a surprising potential for the future of the Church's theology and mission."⁴⁰¹ Furthermore a theology of the family could potentially compliment theological anthropology. Ouellet writes, "at a time when theology risks being dissolved into anthropology under the pressure of anthropocentric culture, God's plan for marriage and family brings theological reflection back to the terrain of the real and dramatic history of human persons grappling with love, sexuality and fecundity. The family resituates theology at the centre of revelation..."⁴⁰² What Ouellet

³⁹⁷ Atkinson, "Family as Domestic Church: Developmental Trajectory," 601.

³⁹⁸ Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, 74.

³⁹⁹ Atkinson, "Family as Domestic Church: Developmental Trajectory," 603.

⁴⁰⁰ CCC 2204.

⁴⁰¹ Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, 75.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*

highlights is how a theology of the family not only supports the ecclesial mission of the domestic church but also enriches theological anthropology.

Support via Family catechesis. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* Pope Francis speaks of the family as an educational setting, a school of human values and the primary setting for socialisation.⁴⁰³ He then proceeds to detail the process of handing on the faith. A striking comment is his exhortation to parents, “the home must continue to be the place where we learn to appreciate the meaning and beauty of the faith...”⁴⁰⁴ He continues to suggest ideas that parents can initiate in the home, but most importantly he states “family catechesis is of great assistance as an effective method in training young parents to be aware of their mission as the evangelisers of their own family.”⁴⁰⁵ Acutely aware of the specific needs in the different ages of children, Francis reminds parents that the education of faith “has to adapt to each child...”⁴⁰⁶ He suggests various different methods of catechesis for different ages, stating that “children need symbols, actions and stories” whereas adolescents ought to be encouraged in their faith and so parents can “provide them with attractive testimonies that win them over by their sheer beauty.”⁴⁰⁷ Here he acknowledges the different developmental needs of children, whilst suggesting methods that parents can employ to faithfully transmit the faith to children. Francis insists that parents who desire to nurture the faith must be “sensitive to their patterns for growth, for they know that spiritual experience is not imposed but freely proposed.”⁴⁰⁸ Ultimately, what Francis understands is that children require catechesis depending on their developmental needs, but also that it is necessary to ensure that family catechesis becomes a priority for the future of the domestic church.

Family Prayer. What was gained in tracing the trajectory of the family from the Old Testament to today was an insight to the operations within the home that sustained the faith of the family. The thread that linked the Old Testament family, to the New Testament family, the family in the Patristic Period, and the family of today, is the centrality of prayer. In each era, whether Hebraic or Christian, families would turn their minds to God. In the Catechism we are reminded that prayer is simply “the raising of one's mind and heart to God.”⁴⁰⁹ Thus, when the family engages in any activity that draws the mind to God, they are in fact praying together. Pope

⁴⁰³ AL, sec. 274 – 276.

⁴⁰⁴ AL, sec. 287.

⁴⁰⁵ AL, sec. 287.

⁴⁰⁶ AL sec. 288.

⁴⁰⁷ AL sec. 288.

⁴⁰⁸ AL sec. 288.

⁴⁰⁹ CCC 2559.

Francis exhorts families to prayer when he states, “moments of family prayer and acts of devotion can be more powerful for evangelization than any catechism class or sermon.”⁴¹⁰ For the family to continue its evangelical mission, prayer must remain at the heart of the family.

5.3 An Ecclesiology of the Family?

Given the conclusions of the previous chapter and considering the breadth of theological discourse in this current chapter, what has emerged is that the pastoral application of the Council’s vision of the family as the domestic church has not kept pace with its doctrinal development. There is still more that needs to be done to fully appreciate the family’s theological value within ecclesiology.

Essentially what needs to happen to facilitate a greater uptake of this theology on a practical level is to recognise the value of the family in the life of the Church. In the long trajectory of the history of this cell, the miniature church, what has become apparent is how important the family is in ensuring the evangelisation of faith to future generations. Perhaps when the family is given its due appropriation as the domestic church, then we will recognise its value as the foundational place for the transmission of faith.

Pope John Paul declared, “*The future of humanity passes by way of the family.*”⁴¹¹ So too can it then be argued that the future of the faith passes by way of the family, for it is the very place that brings forth new members of the Church in baptism and then continues to nurture that faith in the home. It is for this very reason that a greater connection between *theology* and *family* ought to be developed to firmly ground the reality of the family as the domestic church.

⁴¹⁰ AL, sec 288.

⁴¹¹ FC, sec. 86.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the origin of the theology of the domestic church as well as the developments and implications it has had on the Church and families over the centuries. This thesis traced the trajectory of the family, identifying five waves of development of the theology of the domestic church: the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Early Church, the Second Vatican Council, and the pontificate of John Paul II.

Through a survey of the role of the family since the Old Testament to today it was contended that the family is the covenant bearer. This mission has been unchanged since the Old Testament and it is the primary locus for transmitting the faith to future generations. This noble task, with parents educating their children in the faith of their ancestors and bearing the covenant to future generations, eventually led the Fathers of the Early Church to justifiably entitle the family the domestic church. Parents were commissioned to make the Church present within the domestic sphere through prayer, worship, reading scripture, and catechesis. It was demonstrated that parents were primarily responsible for transmitting the covenant. Thus, it was argued “without the family there is no Covenant.”⁴¹² This thesis then proceeded to make the case that the family had a vital role within the Universal Church.

In the second chapter, it was contended that the debates and documents of the Second Vatican Council fostered a *Ressourcement* of the patristic term the domestic church, which had laid dormant for over a century. With champions such as Bishop Pietro Fiordelli, the family received renewed attention and thus began the process of re-evaluating the place of the family within theology. The reintroduction of the concept of the domestic church garnered fervent discussion and this thesis then proceeded to make the case that education in faith begins in the family, with parents aptly referred to as the primary educators. Recalling the archetype that was first demonstrated by the Hebrew family, parents were reminded again of their noble task as the primary educators of the faith. It was argued that the domestic church was not merely a synonym for the family, but an ecclesial reality that recognised the important role that parents have in the life of the Church.

It was argued that the family has an identity that is ecclesial in both nature and mission. The four marks that apply to the Church; one, holy, Catholic, apostolic, are also found in the family. The family is incorporated through baptism, united through marriage, and is thus one and holy.

⁴¹² Atkinson, *Biblical and Theological Foundations of the Family*, 8.

The family participates in the divine life through prayer and sacraments and is thus Catholic. The family is ordained with an educative and evangelical mission, resembling the apostolic mission of the Church. Based on these characteristics it can be concluded that the family has an ecclesial nature and mission.

Through an exploration of the post conciliar doctrine in Chapter Three, it has been demonstrated that the teachings on the family as the domestic church received a new appreciation and understanding as an extension of the life and mission of the Church. The family, which is grafted into the mystery of the Church, was encouraged to form a community of persons, to pray together, become witnesses to Christ, and to share in the life and mission of the Church. This chapter evaluated the significant contributions made by Pope John Paul II in various magisterial documents and explored suggestions of how these teachings could be implemented. It became evident that continued pastoral application of these teachings was necessary in order for them to have a real impact in the life of the Church.

The following chapter examined the way in which the teachings were received or implemented. Upon evaluation of the implementation of these teachings on a universal, diocesan, and local level, a significant gap between doctrine and application became apparent. Whilst some efforts were made to promote the family as the domestic church, there was a considerable disparity between what was taught by Pope John Paul II and what was applied in the years thereafter. It became abundantly clear that there remained a need to support families in their plight of ministering as a domestic church.

In the final chapter it was argued that the future success of the domestic church required further theological development as well as support in practical application. Referring to the work of Saint Augustine and Cardinal Ouellet, a trinitarian theology was proposed as a way of furthering our understanding of the theology of the domestic church with the Trinity as its source and model. Such a rich theology is necessary for us to better understand the role of the family in the life of the Church. It was then argued that more needs to be done to fully appreciate the family's value within ecclesiology and to support the notion that the family is the domestic church.

If any doctrine or theology is to have a real impact a certain receptivity and application is necessary. Therefore, the family requires further theological development as well as ongoing support from the Church in order to fulfil its mission in bearing the covenant to future

generations. The study concluded with an analysis of the future directions for a theology of the family including three points to be considered when supporting the family in its ecclesial mission. Firstly, there is a need to recover the role of the family in the Old Testament reminding parents of their role as ‘covenant bearer’. Secondly, we ought to move beyond using the term domestic church merely as a synonym for the family and further develop it within the realm of theology so that families understand their noble role within the Church. Thirdly, and most importantly, there needs to be support for the family via family catechesis. Based on these conclusions what should be considered is the need to provide practical methods of support in order for families to recover their mission as primary educators of their children. It is for this reason that I have created an evidence-based program, *The Teachable Moment*, to address this need and support families as the domestic church.

This thesis investigated the role of the family since the Old Testament to the present exploring the developments of the phrase domestic church and its implication on the Church and families. This research aimed to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the nature and mission of the family as the domestic church. However, it became apparent that despite recent magisterial teachings on the family, there was a disparity between doctrine and application. Based on this conclusion what should be considered is the need to revive once again the inimitable role of the family through theology and catechesis to ensure families live out the mission they are called to. Saint John Paul II declared “the future of humanity passes by way of the family.”⁴¹³ In light of this research, so too can it be said that the future of the faith passes by way of the family. Therefore, considering the investigation of this thesis we must acknowledge the family as the domestic church, the foundational place from where the Church grows.

⁴¹³ FC, sec. 86.

PRINCIPLES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

THE SIX KEY PRINCIPLES

1. From Old Testament time to the present the family is the Covenant Bearer. ⁴¹⁴

The family continues to have the role of transmitting the covenant from generation to generation. Its mission has been unchanged since the Old Testament and it remains the vehicle for transmitting the covenant to future generations.

- 1.1. The family must pass on the covenant with God.⁴¹⁵
- 1.2. The transmission of the covenant in the Old Testament involved a pedagogy known as the ‘teachable moment’.⁴¹⁶
- 1.3. Since the time of the Early Church and thereafter, the family has continued to be the central place for transmitting the covenant to future generations.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁴ **Refer to sections:** 1.1.1. Covenant Bearer, 1.1.3. The Mission of the Hebrew Family, 1.1.4. The Old Testament Family, Analogous to the Church, 1.2.3. The Mission of the Family and the Household, 1.5.2. Consensus on the Mission of the Family.

⁴¹⁵ **Refer to sections:** 1.1.1. Covenant Bearer, 1.1.2. The Nature of the Hebrew Family, 1.1.3. The Mission of the Hebrew Family, 1.1.4. The Old Testament Family, Analogous to the Church, 1.2.3. The Mission of the Family and the Household, 1.5.2. Consensus on the Mission of the Family, 2.2.1. The Domestic Church in Lumen Gentium, 3.2.1. The Nature of the Domestic Church, 3.3.1. Catechesi Tradendae, 5.2.2. Future Practical Applications.

⁴¹⁶ **Refer to sections:** 1.1.1. Covenant Bearer, 1.1.2. The Nature of the Hebrew Family, 1.1.3. The Mission of the Hebrew Family.

⁴¹⁷ **Refer to sections:** 1.1.1. Covenant Bearer, 1.1.2. The Nature of the Hebrew Family, 1.1.3. The Mission of the Hebrew Family, 1.2.1. The Emergence of the Family in the New Testament Household, 1.2.2. The Nature of the Family and the Household, 1.2.3. The Mission of the Family and the Household, 1.3.1. The Family as Micra Ecclesia, 1.3.2. The Nature of the Family as Micra Ecclesia, 1.3.3. The Mission of the Family as Micra Ecclesia, 1.4.2. The Nature and Mission of the Domestica Ecclesia, 1.5.1. Consensus on the Nature of the Family, 1.5.2. Consensus on the Mission of the Family, 2.2.1. The Domestic Church in Lumen Gentium, 2.2.2. The Family in Gaudium et Spes, 3.1.3. Evangelii Nuntiandi, 3.2.1. The Nature of the Domestic Church, 3.2.2. The Mission of the Domestic Church, 3.2.3. Life in the Domestic Church, 3.3.1. Catechesi Tradendae, 3.3.2. Christifideles Laici, 3.3.3. Gratissimam Sane, 5.2.2. Future Practical Applications.

2. The family is, as Saint Augustine pointed out, the Domestic Church.⁴¹⁸

The family was entitled with the term, *Domestica Ecclesia*, denoting its nature and mission as the Church in the domestic sphere. Its nature is, as Chrysostom suggested, a miniscule Church, commissioned with the role of transmitting the faith.

- 2.1. The family makes the Church present in the domestic sphere by praying together, worshipping together, reading the scriptures together, and handing on the teaching of the faith.⁴¹⁹
- 2.2. The documents of the Second Vatican Council make specific recommendations about how to implement a theology of the domestic church, namely through sacraments, prayer and catechesis.⁴²⁰
- 2.3. Entitled the Domestic Church, the family has an intrinsic duty to transmit the faith in the domestic sphere.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁸ **Refer to sections:** 1.1.4. The Old Testament Family, Analogous to the Church, 1.2.1. The Emergence of the Family in the New Testament Household, 1.3.1. The Family as *Micra Ecclesia*, 1.3.3. This Mission of the Family as *Micra Ecclesia*, 1.4.1. The Family as the *Domestica Ecclesia*, 1.4.2. The Nature and Mission of the *Domestica Ecclesia*, 1.5.1. Consensus on the Nature of the Family, 1.5.2. Consensus on the Mission of the Family, 1.5.3. The Ecclesiality of the Family, 2.2.1 The Domestic Church in *Lumen Gentium*, 2.2.2. The Family in *Gaudium et Spes*, 3.2.1. The Nature of the Domestic Church, 3.2.2. The Mission of the Domestic Church, 3.2.3. Life in the Domestic Church, 5.2.1. Future Theological Discussions, 5.2.2. Future Practical Applications.

⁴¹⁹ **Refer to sections:** 1.1.3. The Mission of the Hebrew Family, 1.1.4. The Old Testament Family, Analogous to the Church, 1.3.3. This Mission of the Family as *Micra Ecclesia*, 1.4.1. The Family as the *Domestica Ecclesia*, 1.4.2. The Nature and Mission of the *Domestica Ecclesia*, 1.5.1. Consensus on the Nature of the Family, 1.5.2. Consensus on the Mission of the Family, 1.5.3. The Ecclesiality of the Family, 2.2.1 The Domestic Church in *Lumen Gentium*, 2.2.2. The Family in *Gaudium et Spes*, 2.3. The Domestic Church in Other Conciliar Documents, 3.1.2. *Marialis Cultus*, 3.1.3. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 3.2.1. The Nature of the Domestic Church, 3.2.2. The Mission of the Domestic Church, 3.2.3. Life in the Domestic Church, 3.3.1. *Catechesi Tradendae*, 3.3.2. *Christifideles Laici*, 3.3.3. *Gratissimam Sane*, 4.2.2. The Diocese.

⁴²⁰ **Refer to sections:** 2.2.1 The Domestic Church in *Lumen Gentium*, 2.2.2. The Family in *Gaudium et Spes*, 2.3. The Domestic Church in other Conciliar Documents, 3.1.1. *Humanae Vitae*, 3.1.2. *Marialis Cultus*, 3.1.3. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 3.2.1. The Nature of the Domestic Church, 3.2.2. The Mission of the Domestic Church, 3.2.3. Life in the Domestic Church, 3.3.1. *Catechesi Tradendae*, 3.3.2. *Christifideles Laici*, 3.3.3. *Gratissimam Sane*, 4.1.1. Pontifical Council for the Family.

⁴²¹ **Refer to sections:** 1.3.1. The Family as *Micra Ecclesia*, 1.3.3. The Mission of the Family as *Micra Ecclesia*, 1.4.2. The Nature and Mission of the *Domestica Ecclesia*, 1.5.1. Consensus on the Nature of the Family, 1.5.2. Consensus on the Mission of the Family, 1.5.3. The Ecclesiality of the Family, 2.2.1. The Domestic Church in *Lumen Gentium*, 2.2.2. The Family in *Gaudium et Spes*, 2.3. The Domestic Church in other Conciliar Documents, 3.1.3. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 3.2.2. The Mission of the Domestic Church, 3.3.1. *Catechesi Tradendae* 3.3.2. *Christifideles Laici*, 5.2.1. Future Theological Discussions.

3. Education in faith begins in the family.⁴²²

The education of faith begins in the home through the parents, who are aptly referred to as the primary educators of faith. This designation is not simply a modern construct, but it has been the mission of parents since the Old Testament.

- 3.1. The Old Testament family is the archetype of education in faith, with the parents cultivating teachable moments that enable opportunities to catechise.⁴²³
- 3.2. Religious events, rituals, and artefacts were concrete opportunities used by the Old Testament family as points for catechesis, which remain effective strategies for contemporary catechesis.⁴²⁴
- 3.3. The Magisterium affirms the role of parents as primary educators, encouraging them to pray together, such as the Rosary and the Divine Office, worship together, namely through the Eucharist, and preach the faith through reading the Word of God.⁴²⁵

⁴²² **Refer to sections:** 1.1.2. The Nature of the Hebrew Family, 1.1.3. The Mission of the Hebrew Family, 1.1.4. The Old Testament Family, Analogous to the Church, 1.3.3. This Mission of the Family as *Micra Ecclesia*, 2.2.1 The Domestic Church in *Lumen Gentium*, 2.2.2. The Family in *Gaudium et Spes*, 2.3. The Domestic Church in other Conciliar Documents, 3.1.3. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 3.2.1. The Nature of the Domestic Church, 3.2.2. The Mission of the Domestic Church, 3.2.3. Life in the Domestic Church, 3.3.1. *Catechesi Tradendae*, 3.3.2. *Christifideles Laici*, 3.3.3. *Gratissimam Sane*, 4.1.1. Pontifical Council for the Family.

⁴²³ **Refer to sections:** 1.1.1. Covenant Bearer, 1.1.2. The Nature of the Hebrew Family, 1.1.3. The Mission of the Hebrew Family, 1.1.4. The Old Testament Family, Analogous to the Church, 1.5.1. Consensus on the Nature of the Family, 1.5.2. Consensus on the Mission of the Family, 1.5.3. The Ecclesiality of the Family, 2.2.2. *Gaudium et Spes*, 3.1.2. *Marialis Cultus*, 3.3.2. *Christifideles Laici*, 3.3.3. *Gratissimam Sane*, 5.2.2. Future Practical Applications.

⁴²⁴ **Refer to sections:** 1.1.2. The Nature of the Hebrew Family, 1.1.3. The Mission of the Hebrew Family, 1.1.4. The Old Testament Family, Analogous to the Church, 1.5.2. Consensus on the Mission of the Family, 3.2.2. The Mission of the Domestic Church, 3.2.3. Life in the Domestic Church, 3.3.1. *Catechesi Tradendae*, 3.3.2. *Christifideles Laici*, 3.3.3. *Gratissimam Sane*, 5.2.2. Future Practical Applications.

⁴²⁵ **Refer to sections:** 2.2.1 The Domestic Church in *Lumen Gentium*, 2.2.2. The Family in *Gaudium et Spes*, 2.3. The Domestic Church in other Conciliar Documents, 2.4. The Challenges in Appropriation, 3.1.2. *Marialis Cultus*, 3.1.3. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 3.2. The Significance of *Familiaris Consortio* for Marriage and the Family, 3.2.1. The Nature of the Domestic Church, 3.2.2. The Mission of the Domestic Church, 3.2.3. Life in the Domestic Church, 3.3.1. *Catechesi Tradendae*, 3.3.2. *Christifideles Laici*, 3.3.3. *Gratissimam Sane*.

4. The family has an identity that is ecclesial in nature and mission.⁴²⁶

By its nature and through its mission, the family has an identity that is likened to the Church. The four marks that apply to the Church; one, holy, Catholic, apostolic, can be found in the family. Therefore, it can be said that the family has ecclesial traits.

- 4.1. Incorporated into the life of Christ through Baptism, and united through Matrimony, the family is one and holy, reflecting a likeness to the Church.⁴²⁷
- 4.2. Where there is Christ Jesus, there is the Catholic Church. Thus, when the family participates in the divine life of Christ through prayer and the sacraments, it is catholic.⁴²⁸
- 4.3. The family is ordained with an educative and evangelical mission, resembling the apostolic mission of the Church.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁶ **Refer to sections:** 1.1.4. The Old Testament Family, Analogous to the Church, 1.2.1. The Emergence of the Family in the New Testament Household, 1.2.2. The Nature of the Family and the Household, 1.3.1. The Family as *Micra Ecclesia*, 1.3.2. The Nature of the Family as *Micra Ecclesia*, 1.3.3. The Mission of the Family as *Micra Ecclesia*, 1.4.1. The Family as the *Domestica Ecclesia*, 1.4.2. The Nature and Mission of the *Domestica Ecclesia*, 1.5.1. Consensus on the Nature of the Family, 1.5.2. Consensus on the Mission of the Family, 1.5.3. The Ecclesiality of the Family, 2.1.3. Fiordelli's Third Intervention, 2.2.2. The Family in *Gaudium et Spes*, 3.1.3. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 3.2. The Significance of *Familiaris Consortio* for Marriage and the Family, 3.2.1. The Nature of the Domestic Church, 3.2.2. The Mission of the Domestic Church, 3.2.3. Life in the Domestic Church, 5.2.1. Future Theological Discussions, 5.2.2. Future Practical Application.

⁴²⁷ **Refer to sections:** 1.2.2. The Nature of the Family and the Household, 1.2.3. The Mission of the Family and the Household, 1.3.2. The Nature of the Family as *Micra Ecclesia*, 1.3.3. The Mission of the Family as *Micra Ecclesia*, 1.5.1. Consensus on the Nature of the Family, 1.5.2. Consensus on the Mission of the Family, 2.1.1. Fiordelli's First Intervention, 2.1.2. Fiordelli's Second Intervention, 2.2.1. The Family in *Lumen Gentium*, 2.2.2. The Family in *Gaudium et Spes*, 2.3. The Domestic Church in other Conciliar Documents, 3.2.1. The Nature of the Domestic Church, 3.2.2. The Mission of the Domestic Church, 3.2.3. Life in the Domestic Church, 3.3.3. *Gratissimam Sane*, 5.1.2. John Paul II's Theology of the Family, 5.2.1. Future Theological Discussions.

⁴²⁸ **Refer to sections:** 2.2.1. The Family in *Lumen Gentium*, 2.2.2. The Family in *Gaudium et Spes*, , 2.3. The Domestic Church in other Conciliar Documents, 3.1.2. *Marialis Cultus*, 3.1.3. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 3.2.1. The Nature of the Domestic Church, 3.2.2. This Mission of the Domestic Church, 3.2.3. Life in the Domestic Church, 3.3.2. *Christifideles Laici*, 3.3.3. *Gratissimam Sane*.

⁴²⁹ **Refer to sections:** 1.1.2. The Nature of the Hebrew Family, 1.1.3. The Mission of the Hebrew Family, 1.1.4. The Old Testament Family, Analogous to the Church, 1.2.3. The Mission of the Family and the Household, 1.3.3. The Mission of the Family as *Micra Ecclesia*, 1.5.2. Consensus on the Mission of the Family, 1.5.3. The Ecclesiality of the Family, 2.2.1. The Domestic Church in *Lumen Gentium*, 2.2.2. The Family in *Gaudium et Spes*, 2.3. The Domestic Church in other Conciliar Documents, 3.1.3. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 3.2. The Significance of *Familiaris Consortio* for Marriage and the Family, 3.2.1. The Nature of the Domestic Church, 3.2.2. The Mission of the Domestic Church, 3.2.3. Life in the Domestic Church, 3.3.1. *Catechesi Tradendae*, 3.3.2. *Christifideles Laici*, 3.4.1. Pastoral Care, 5.2.1. Future Theological Discussions.

5. The family's life and mission are an extension of the life and mission of the Church.⁴³⁰

Through a deeper appreciation of the life and mission of the family, particularly through the lens of John Paul II's theology, what becomes apparent is how the family is an extension of the Church. John Paul II considered the family as being 'grafted into the mystery of the Church' to such a degree as to become a sharer in the mission of the Church.

- 5.1. John Paul II encouraged parents to introduce their children to the faith, explain liturgical celebrations and feast days, educate them in prayer, teach them to serve others, and become witnesses to Christ.⁴³¹
- 5.2. The family's mission, according to John Paul II, is to form a community of persons, serve life, participate in the development of society, and share in the life and mission of the Church, which are four characteristics of the Church.⁴³²
- 5.3. Life in the domestic church reflects the Universal Church.⁴³³

⁴³⁰ **Refer to sections:** 2.1.1. Fiordelli's First Intervention, 2.1.2. Fiordelli's Second Intervention, 2.2.1. The Domestic Church in *Lumen Gentium*, 2.2.2. The Family in *Gaudium et Spes*, 2.3. The Domestic Church in other Conciliar Documents, 2.1.2. *Marialis Cultus*, 3.1.3. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 3.2.1. The Nature of the Domestic Church, 3.2.2. The Mission of the Domestic Church, 3.2.3. Life in the Domestic Church, 3.3.2. *Christifideles Laici*, 5.2.1. Future Theological Discussions.

⁴³¹ **Refer to sections:** 3.2. The Significance of *Familiaris Consortio* for Marriage and the Family, 3.2.1. The Nature of the Domestic Church, 3.2.2. The Mission of the Domestic Church, 3.2.3. Life in the Domestic Church, 3.3.1. *Catechesi Tradendae*, 3.3.2. *Christifideles Laici*, 3.4. Supporting the Domestic Church, 3.4.1. Pastoral Care, 5.1.2. John Paul II's Theology of the Family, 5.1.3. Ouellet's Theology of the Family, 5.2.1. Future Theological Discussions.

⁴³² **Refer to sections:** 3.2.1. The Nature of the Domestic Church, 3.2.2. The Mission of the Domestic Church, 3.2.3. Life in the Domestic Church, 3.3.1. *Catechesi Tradendae*, 3.3.2. *Christifideles Laici*, 3.3.3. *Gratissimam Sane*, 5.1.1. Augustine's Theology of the Family, 5.1.2. John Paul II's Theology of the Family, 5.1.3. Ouellet's Theology of the Family, 5.2.1. Future Theological Discussions, 5.2.2. Future Practical Applications.

⁴³³ **Refer to sections:** 1.1.2. The Nature of the Hebrew Family, 1.1.4. The Old Testament Family, Analogous to the Church, 1.2.1. The Emergence of the Family in the New Testament, 1.3.1. The Family as *Micra Ecclesia*, 1.3.2. The Nature of the Family as *Micra Ecclesia*, 1.3.3. The Mission of the Family as *Micra Ecclesia*, 1.4.1. The Family as the *Domestica Ecclesia*, 1.4.2. The Nature and Mission of the *Domestica Ecclesia*, 1.5.1. Consensus on the Nature of the Family, 1.5.2. Consensus on the Mission of the Family, 1.5.3. The Ecclesiality of the Family, 2.2.2. The Family in *Gaudium et Spes*, 2.3. The Domestic Church in other Conciliar Documents, 3.2. The Significance of *Familiaris Consortio* for Marriage and the Family, 3.2.1. The Nature of the Domestic Church, 3.2.2. The Mission of the Domestic Church, 3.2.3. Life in the Domestic Church, 3.3.2. *Christifideles Laici*, 5.2.1. Future Theological Discussions.

6. The family requires ongoing support from the Church to fulfil its mission.⁴³⁴

The family has a central role within the Church, bearing the covenant to future generations. If families are to succeed in living out this mission, then there is a need to provide them with ongoing support.

- 6.1. Pastoral care for the family on a parish and diocesan level is essential to their mission of education in faith.⁴³⁵
- 6.2. Practical resources are effective tools that families can use to enable them to live out their mission as the domestic church.⁴³⁶
- 6.3. The family, which assumes the role as covenant bearer, needs support to recognise and fulfil its ecclesial mission.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁴ **Refer to sections:** 2.1.4. Fiordelli's Role in the *Ressourcement*, 3.4. Supporting the Domestic Church, 3.4.1. Pastoral Care, 3.4.2. Marriage Preparation, 3.4.3. Parish and Community Associations, 4.1.1. Pontifical Council for the Family, 4.1.2. John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family, 5.2.1. Future Theological Discussions.

⁴³⁵ **Refer to sections:** 2.1.4. Fiordelli's Role in the *Ressourcement*, 3.4. Supporting the Domestic Church, 3.4.1. Pastoral Care, 3.4.2. Marriage Preparation, 3.4.3. Parish and Community Associations, 4.1.1. Pontifical Council for the Family, 4.1.2. John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family, 4.1.3. Year of the Family, 4.2.1. The Episcopate, 4.2.2. The Diocese, 4.4.1. Pastoral Care in Preparation for Marriage, 4.4.2. Pastoral Care After Marriage, 4.4.3. Pastoral Care within the Parish, 4.5. The Gap between Doctrine and Application, 5.2.1. Future Theological Discussions, 5.2.2. Future Practical Applications.

⁴³⁶ **Refer to sections:** 3.4. Supporting the Domestic Church, 3.4.1. Pastoral Care, 3.4.2. Marriage Preparation, 3.4.3. Parish and Community Associations, 4.1.1. Pontifical Council for the Family, 4.1.2. John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family, 4.2.1. The Episcopate, 4.2.2. The Diocese, 4.3.2. Gerard O'Shea, 4.3.3. Joseph Atkinson, 4.4.1. Pastoral Care in Preparation for Marriage, 4.4.2. Pastoral Care After Marriage, 4.4.3. Pastoral Care within the Parish, 5.2.1. Future Theological Discussions, 5.2.2. Future Practical Applications.

⁴³⁷ **Refer to sections:** 2.2.1. The Domestic Church in *Lumen Gentium*, 2.2.2. The Family in *Gaudium et Spes*, 3.2.1. The Nature of the Domestic Church, 3.2.2. The Mission of the Domestic Church, 3.3.1. *Catechesi Tradendae*, 3.3.2. *Christifideles Laici*, 3.4. Supporting the Domestic Church, 3.4.1. Pastoral Care, 3.4.2. Marriage Preparation, 4.1.1. Pontifical Council for the Family, 4.4.1. Pastoral Care in Preparation for Marriage, 4.4.2. Pastoral Care after Marriage, 4.4.3. Pastoral Care within the Parish, 5.2.1. Future Theological Discussions, 5.2.2. Future Practical Applications.

APPENDIX

CORRELATING THE SIX PRINCIPLES WITH THE TEACHABLE MOMENT RESOURCE

Introduction and Teachable Moments 1 – 5

Principle	Introduction	Teachable Moment 1	Teachable Moment 2	Teachable Moment 3	Teachable Moment 4	Teachable Moment 5
1. Covenant Bearer	✓					
1.1 The Family	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1.2 Teachable Moment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1.3 Transmitting Covenant	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Domestic Church	✓					
2.1 Church in the Home		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.2 Second Vatican Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

2.3 Duty to Transmit faith	✓					
3. Education in Faith	✓					
3.1 Old Testament Archetype	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.2 Catechesis		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.3 Primary Educators		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. Ecclesial Nature	✓					
4.1 Baptism						✓
4.2 Prayer and Sacrament		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.3 Apostolic Mission	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

5. Extension of the Church	✓					
5.1 John Paul II	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5.2 Community of Persons			✓			
5.3 Universal Church	✓					
6. Support for Families	✓					
6.1 Pastoral Care	✓					
6.2 Practical Resources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.3 Ecclesial Mission	✓					

TEACHABLE MOMENTS 6 – 10

Principle	Teachable Moment 6	Teachable Moment 7	Teachable Moment 8	Teachable Moment 9	Teachable Moment 10
1. Covenant Bearer					
1.1 The Family	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1.2 Teachable Moment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1.3 Transmitting Covenant	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Domestic Church					
2.1 Church in the Home	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.2 Second Vatican Council	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.3 Duty to Transmit faith					

3. Education in Faith					
3.1 Old Testament Archetype	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.2 Catechesis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.3 Primary Educators	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. Ecclesial Nature					
4.1 Baptism					
4.2 Prayer and Sacrament	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.3 Apostolic Mission	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5. Extension of the Church					

5.1 John Paul II	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5.2 Community of Persons	✓	✓		✓	✓
5.3 Universal Church					
6. Support for Families					
6.1 Pastoral Care					
6.2 Practical Resources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.3 Ecclesial Mission					

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The Teachable Moment



Image: Paul Newton, *First Catholics of Sydney, Circa 1818*. Posted 2011, oil on linen, <https://paulnewton.com.au/enlargements/?id=7>

A Guidebook for Parents

By

Mishel Stefanac

WHAT IS THE TEACHABLE MOMENT?

A GUIDEBOOK FOR PARENTS TO SUPPORT THEIR DOMESTIC CHURCH

Pope Saint John Paul II once famously declared, ‘*The future of humanity passes by way of the family.*’⁴³⁸ In light of the research on the theology of the family it can thus be said, ‘the future of the faith passes by way of the family.’ It is the very place that brings forth new members of the Church and is entrusted to then cultivate and nurture the faith. From Old Testament time to the present the family has been the Covenant Bearer, with parents passing on the faith to their children. This role requires continual support to ensure that families fulfil their ecclesial mission and that the Covenant of our faith is carried over to the next generation. The family, as Saint Augustine pointed out, is the Domestic Church.⁴³⁹ This then has implications on how the family ought to operate, namely as a little church. However, the questions that remain are, ‘what does the family pass on?’ and ‘how can it be effectively transmitted?’

The aim of this resource is to support the claim that education in faith begins in the family. This resource will equip parents with the tools, or rather ‘Teachable Moments’, that will enable parents to pass on the content of the faith to their families, and to do so in such a way that is effective for children of various ages to understand.

Underlying this resource is the understanding that the family is an extension of the Church, which means it too bears a responsibility of education in faith. However, what is imperative in faith education is that the family receives ongoing support to fulfill its educative mission. It is precisely this principle that has prompted the creation of this resource, which will support parents in their plight of transmitting the faith to their children.

⁴³⁸ FC, sec 86.

⁴³⁹ Atkinson, *Biblical Foundations for the Theology of the Family*, 271.

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Introduction

This resource is intended for parents who are aware of the role they bear in passing on the faith to their children. For most parents, the question is ‘where do I begin?’ From there the questions continue, and well-intentioned parents are challenged with what to do next. Not every parent is a teacher, but every parent can teach. In fact, when it comes to matters of faith education it is the parents who are the primary educators. This resource will enable parents to fulfil their noble role as primary educators of the faith, providing mothers and fathers with ideas for what they can teach and how they can teach it to children of various ages.

Coincidentally this resource has been created at a timely period for the Church. Whilst the research was completed in the years preceding, this resource was created during the time of the Coronavirus pandemic. In Victoria, as well as in many other states, territories, and nations, we have witnessed the suspension of all public, collective forms of worship. This situation has meant that the only place people can gather together to pass on the faith, is in their family. This circumstance has highlighted the importance of the family in their role as the domestic church. At a time when the local church can no longer open its doors to support the families in its parish, the domestic church has become the sole place of faith formation. What parents do now for their families is imperative for the future of our Church. Not only will family faith education have immediate impact on their children, but it will also ensure the flame of faith it still burning once public worship resumes.

This resource aims to provide parents with support to make of their homes a domestic church, and to transmit the faith to the children. This exceptional circumstance, which has seen the world faced with a pandemic and a cessation of public workshop, has highlighted the central role that parents have in their families, and the role that families have in the Church.

Structure

There are ten teachable moments that form this resource. Adapted from the Hebrew family's educational process, the *teachable moment* was a concept employed by Jewish fathers whereby they waited 'until children became curious because of some external event in a ritual or due to some artefact they see.'⁴⁴⁰ When the child began to ask questions about an aspect related to the faith, the teachable moment had arisen and the parent addressed the subject.

This method seizes opportune moments, or even creates opportunities, that would prompt a child's sense of wonder about a topic. This moment, the *teachable moment*, becomes the occasion for parents to teach that aspect of the faith. In this resource there are ten topics, each employing the strategy of creating teachable moments. The topics can then be explored on three different levels depending on the needs of your child. These topics are designed to coincide with the Church's liturgical year. However, these individual moments can be addressed at any time they arise and can be revisited when necessary.

Teachable Moments

The topics that will be addressed include:

1. Prayer
2. Lent
3. Holy Week and Easter
4. Mass
5. Sacraments of Initiation
6. Sacraments of Healing
7. Death and Everlasting Life
8. Feast Days
9. Advent
10. Christmas

⁴⁴⁰ Atkinson, *Biblical Foundations for the Theology of the Family*, 96.

Three Stages of Learning

There is a natural order of learning that can be summarised simply as, *from the concrete to the abstract*. This saying recognises that whenever a person is introduced to new learning, they are inclined to prefer to start at a concrete stage. This means that they will require something tactile as a means of accessing new information. Once the learning needs have been satisfied at the concrete stage, a learner will then be inclined to personalise their understanding on a deeper level. When this affective dimension has been satisfied the learner will seek to intellectualise their learning, thus arriving at a stage where learning is abstract.

Gerard O'Shea describes this order of learning as a threefold structure; Body, Heart, Mind.⁴⁴¹ The most effective starting point in education ought to appeal to the senses or something tactile, addressing the needs of the *body*. From there, the affective dimension is addressed, namely the *heart*. Finally, once learning has been processed on the level of the heart, the learner intellectualises their experiences into mental constructs, thus appealing to the *mind*. Many of the activities suggested in this resource have been inspired by the works of Sofia Cavaletti, founder of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, as well as the work of Dr Gerard O'Shea. Combined with my own experiences in the classroom, these activities have been tried and tested among primary school aged children. They have now been adapted to suit educational tasks in the home.

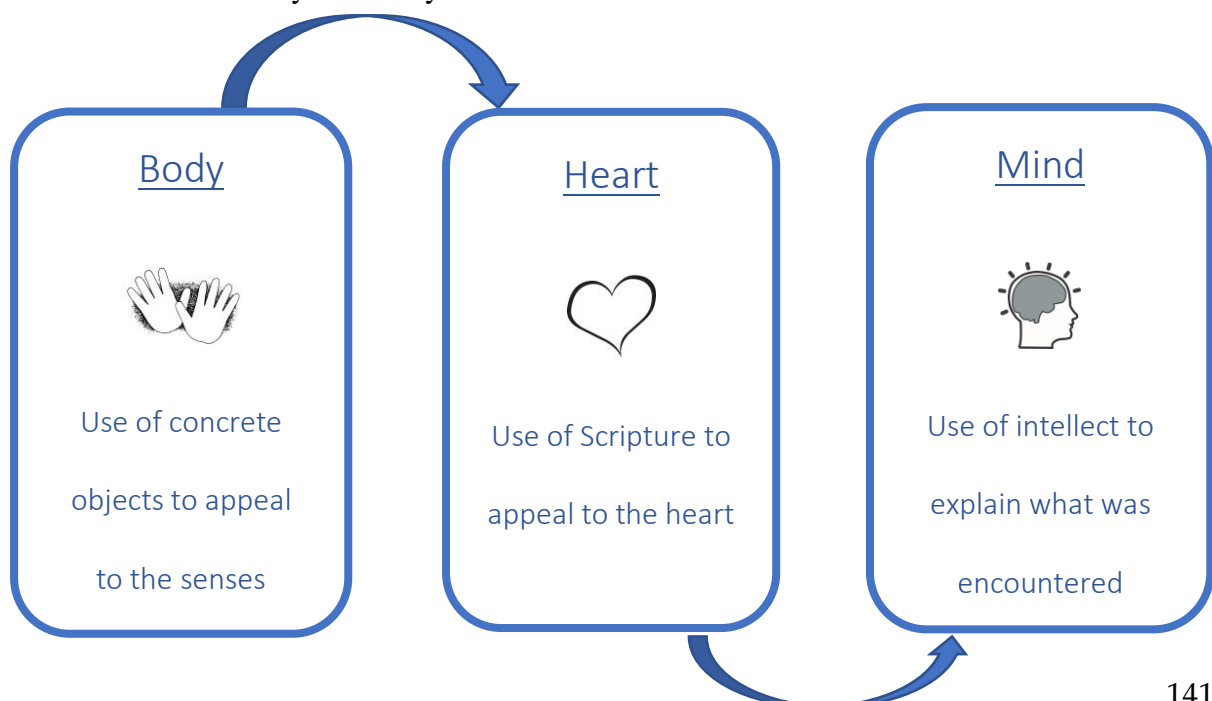
Based on the axiom, *concrete to abstract*, and incorporating the *Body, Heart, Mind* structure, this resource is designed in such a way that each topic has three stages of depth. This will enable one topic to be developed deeper each time it is revisited. Generally, a child in their early years will prefer activities that appeal to the body. Once the child is approximately six years old, they will be more inclined to personalise their learning on the level of the heart.

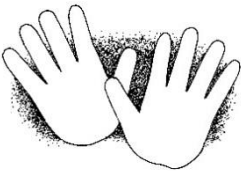
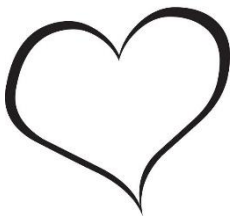

⁴⁴¹ Gerard O'Shea, "Towards a Trinitarian Anthropology of Learning," in *Catholicism, Culture, Education*, ed. Leonardo Franchi (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2018), 236.

Finally, when the child reaches approximately nine years of age, they will arrive at stage where they will be able to intellectualise their learning. However, these ages are not fixed, and prudence must be taken when applying a task to a child based on their age. Regardless of age, if a child is learning something for the first time, they must always begin at the first level, the body. Once they are satisfied with this stage, they can then move on to the next. Age ought not be the determining factor of moving a child to their next stage of learning.

In this resource each topic will have three levels of learning: Body, Heart, Mind. As a parent you will know where your child ought to begin, and when they will be ready for their next stage of learning. Below is a table that indicates how each topic will be presented in this resource. It will provide you with a brief overview of what type of activities can be presented to a child at the three different stages of learning. Each of the ten teachable moments will follow this threefold structure, and it will be the prerogative of the parents to know when to move along to a new stage. Be aware that a child may spend years in one stage before they will be ready to move on to the next.

Please note that this educative structure can then be applied to other topics that may arise in the faith education of your family.



<p style="text-align: center;">Body</p> 	<p>The Concrete Stage</p> <p>The first time a child encounters new learning we begin with something concrete, something that appeals to their senses. A learner will need a concrete example to enable them to enter into the space of wonder.⁴⁴² An example of this might mean allowing a child to hold Rosary beads whilst praying as a family or having a holy water font in the home from which they can learn to bless themselves. The body stage is not strictly reduced to touch. Appealing to <i>all</i> senses is important at this level, so playing hymns or smelling the scent of oils at a baptism (if the occasion arises) can appeal to the senses of hearing and smell. Throughout this resource, <i>Body</i> activities will always aim to suggest tasks that appeal to the senses.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Heart</p> 	<p>The Affective Stage</p> <p>Once they have gained an entry to a new reality via concrete means, children will need to be challenged further to a more supernatural level. In other words, we now need to appeal to their hearts. When concrete materials no longer seem to effectively engage your child, this will indicate their readiness to deepen their knowledge on the level of the heart. At this stage, the most effective means of engaging your child with new learning is with the use of Scripture. As O’Shea notes, ‘it is the actual words of the Scriptures themselves that seem to have an effect on their hearts.’⁴⁴³ Finding Scripture passages that relate to the topic you would like to address will be the most effective way of appealing to your child. It must be noted that these passages need not be lengthy. Provide short passages but allow time for your child to read and reflect on the things that captured their heart.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Mind</p> 	<p>The Abstract Stage</p> <p>The third level of depth is the stage where learning can be intellectualised. It is a synthesis point, where the mind can now describe what engaged the senses and captured the heart. Your child will arrive at this stage once they have processed the information on the level of the heart. They will now be ready to deepen their knowledge and ‘compress the experiences into mental constructs, propositions which can be stored in the mind for easy recollection.’⁴⁴⁴ At this point they will be capable of more abstract thoughts and ideas and will be able to synthesise their previous discoveries.</p>
<p>Key principles addressed in this introduction: 1, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2, 2.2, 2.3, 3, 3.1, 4, 4.3, 5, 5.1, 5.3, 6, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3.</p>	

⁴⁴² O’Shea, “Towards a Trinitarian Anthropology of Learning,” 237.

⁴⁴³ Gerard O’Shea, “Human Embodiment and Trinitarian Anthropology- Six Implications for Religious Education,” *Studia Elckie* 15, no. 4 (2013): 459,

http://www.studielckie.pl/images/sampled/annex/studia_elckie/2013/4/01_03-Edu-OShea.pdf.

⁴⁴⁴ O’Shea, “Towards a Trinitarian Anthropology of Learning,” 237.

Teachable Moment 1

Prayer

Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God.

St John Damascene

Prayer is central to the Christian life. It is our way of communicating with God and this form of communication is passed on to children through the family. My maternal grandparents received no formal education, and my paternal grandparents were discouraged from attending Mass as a result of the Communist regime they lived under. As a result, my own parents had no formal instruction in the faith, yet there was one thing they were able to pass on to me as it was something that had been orally transmitted to them: prayer.

This jewel was a treasure that had been passed onto me from my parents, which was passed onto to them from their own parents. If I explored my family tree even further, I have no doubt that this oral tradition of passing-on prayer would have been extended for generations. When my family was forbidden from attending Mass, there was still one thing that remained to keep the flame of faith burning: prayer.

Prayer is the oxygen that gives life to our faith. It is the foundation of our relationship with God. It is imperative to the life of our faith and therefore must be a primary focus with our children. The Church affirms parents in this role, encouraging them to pray as family through means such as the Rosary, Divine Office, Mass, and Scripture.

Cultivating the Teachable Moment:

Create regular prayer times as a family, such as at the front door when leaving for work or school, before or after dinner, or even at bedtime each night. Routine is imperative.

Miniature prayer tables, including items such as a crucifix, a statue of Mary the Mother of Jesus, a candle, and a Bible, can cultivate a prayerful environment in the household.

Regardless of which prayers you choose to pray, what is essential in this moment is that parents are modelling prayer to their children and with their children. There is a plethora of different prayers we can access and pray together, but what must remain in the forefront of our minds when educating children in prayer is that it is simply 'raising one's mind and heart to God.'

Education in Prayer

Body



The Sign of the Cross – This is the first form of prayer you can teach your child. When I was a toddler, my mother would hold my hand as she motioned across my body, making the Sign of the Cross. Once I learned how to speak, I was taught the words to match the gestures. Holy water fonts in the home are also effective as children enjoy being able to put their hand in water as they bless themselves.



The image is an example of a simple holy water font that can be used in the home.

Silence – It is quite challenging to teach traditional prayers at this early stage. Instead it is important to cultivate silence, thus creating the conditions where a child can *listen* to God. The silence appeals to their sensory needs and allows space for cultivating reverence. Deliberate silence creates the space where a child can listen to God, and thus respond to Him. It is important to allow the young child to interiorise their prayer prior to verbalising prayer.

Spontaneous Prayer – In response to silence, children will become aware of their surroundings and what they are grateful for. Before they can recite long prayers, they will be able to form simple prayers of thanksgiving. At this stage, it is important to encourage your child to form simple prayers of thanksgiving, such as: *thank you God for my family, thank you God for the beautiful day, thank you God for the birds and flowers.*

When children encounter something beautiful, or something that appeals to their senses, encourage them to thank God for that encounter. Thanksgiving is the most basic form of prayer, which a child in this stage can accomplish with ease. Ultimately, it establishes the basis of a relationship between your child and God.

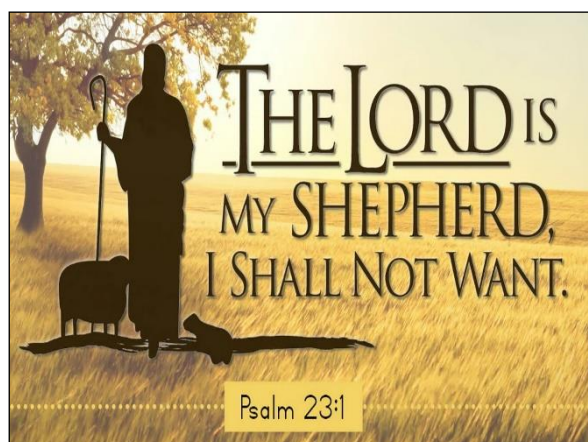


Reciting Prayers – Once your child develops in their prayer life, you can slowly introduce traditional prayers, such as The Lord’s Prayer or the Hail Mary. For the young child it is important to teach this in small steps. At this early stage, you may like to introduce only one phrase for them to reflect upon, such as ‘Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name.’ Teaching one phrase allows space to reflect more deeply on the words rather than on memorisation.

Light a Candle – If there are moments where your family prays together using Scripture, this is a perfect opportunity to provide something concrete for the young child to gaze upon. Lighting a candle and saying, ‘This reminds us that Jesus is the Light of the World, and He is with us when we read from the Bible.’ This simple gesture teaches a truth, namely that Jesus is the Light of the World, whilst also appealing the senses.



The Bible – As your child develops further in this stage, you might like to introduce them to phrases from Scripture, such as a Psalm or words found in the New Testament. Ensure there is a Bible for them to see, and perhaps allow them to hold it as you locate a phrase for them to pray. The words need only be simple, such as *The Lord is my Shepherd* or *Peace be with you*.



Heart



Bible Reading – Allow your child time to spend with Scripture as a deeper way to pray. If they are unable to read, then read the words for them but ensure you allow time for them to ponder the words. Time is of essence when a child is encountering material that is intended to appeal to the heart. Guide them to passages such as the psalms. The words need only be simple, such as *Guard me as the apple of your eye, Hide me in the shadow of your wings*. These psalms can also be printed out onto cards, which you can then hand to your child. Many calendars or posters can be found on the internet with simple psalms written on images. Print them and have them available for your child to read.



Silence – As in the previous stage, silence remains an important aspect of prayer time. It is important to continue allowing a dedicated time and space for your child to interiorise their prayer. They might like to hold onto one of the prayer cards during their time of meditative silence.

Hymns – Music and lyrics are an exceptional resource. With many online sites available with libraries of hymns, it is easy to search for appealing prayerful songs that are related to Scripture. It would also be beneficial to print the lyrics to accompany the hymns. Your child can then read and contemplate the words, thus allowing for a more tangible way to appeal to their heart.

Contemplation of Art – Before my years of becoming an avid reader, my parents gifted me with an illustrated Bible. However, it was not a cartoon-like story, it was a book filled with religious images and paintings. I was captivated by the beautiful images before I could even read the words. Art is an excellent way of appealing to the prayerful heart of the child. Particularly if they are unable to read, art can provide children with a stimulus to help them learn the stories of Scripture. A quick internet search can result in many pictures that you can print. However, it is also a good idea to have religious art in frames, perhaps prints or icons. Rich imagery appeals to the heart of the child, whilst leading them in prayer through contemplation.



Prayers of the Faithful – When your child begins to move beyond prayers of thanksgiving, they will become more inclined to pray in petition and intercession, asking God for the things that appeal to their hearts. During family prayer times, such as after dinner or before bed, you can prompt your child with a question such as, or ‘what would you like to ask God for and *why*?’ (*Note: Asking ‘why’ will enable children to form prayers that move beyond simple wishes, encouraging them to think about whether their petition is truly seeking good for God’s Kingdom or if it keeps with the teachings of Christ.) You can follow a simple formula, with the response ‘*Lord, hear our prayer.*’

Prayer Books – Once your child develops in their prayer life, you can continue to introduce traditional prayers, such as The Lord’s Prayer or the Hail Mary. It is a good idea to find simple prayer books that they can read and thus search for prayers that appeal to their hearts.

Mind



Lectio Divina – To further develop prayer with the use of Scripture, children at this stage can be introduced to *Lectio Divina*. Encourage your child to use this process to read slowly and thoughtfully, with purposeful reflection on the words they read. This type of reflective, prayerful reading will enable your child to synthesise the Scripture passages they have encountered on a deeper level.

Adoration – Prayerful silence remains necessary for your child’s prayer life, and adoration appeals to this need. Some parishes provide these opportunities, and it is appealing to an older child in this developmental stage. These times of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament need not be long hours spent in silence. In fact, ten or fifteen minutes of silent adoration will suffice.

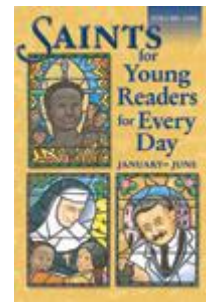
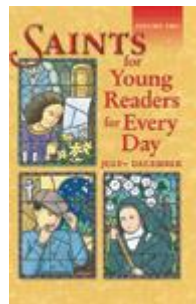


Rosary/Angelus – Establish times of dedicated prayer. Traditionally, the Angelus is prayed at 6:00 AM, 12:00 PM and 6:00 PM. Encourage your child to stop and pray at one of these hours. The Rosary can also be set up at a regular time in your home to encourage routine prayer. Allowing your child to lead a decade of the Rosary will engage them more deeply, particularly as it will endow them with a responsibility. If you have younger children, or those at an earlier stage, they can participate in praying the Rosary by holding the beads (Body/Concrete) or announcing the Mysteries of the Rosary with the corresponding Scripture passage (Heart/Affective).

Divine Mercy – This is another prayer that you can introduce to your child in this developmental stage. It is said at 3:00 PM and is something that your child can do independently. They might like to reflect on this devotion, perhaps by reading about the background of this prayer and how it relates to Scripture.

Liturgy of the Hours /Divine Office – This is a set of prayers, that mark different hours of the day. It is a traditional prayer of the Church and is an obligation for priests and deacons to pray each day. However, it is encouraged among the lay faithful and perhaps your child might enjoy praying the psalms or prayers of one of the particular hours. The Divine Office, or even one of the hours such as ‘Evening Prayer’, may be a way that you can pray as a family. In fact, Pope Paul VI encouraged families to engage in this prayer, “in order to be more intimately linked with the Church.” (*Marialis Cultus*, 1974, n 53.)

Saints – Appealing to the intellect, are the lives of Saints. Children enjoy reading about those who have put their faith into action and will be inspired by the Saints of the Church. I recall every Sunday after Mass; I would stop by the piety stall and find myself drawn to the miniature saints’ books. If I was lucky, my mum might have had a few coins with her and purchased one for me to add to my collection. They were short stories, but it was through these books that I found my heroes, and decided on my patron Saint, whose name I took at Confirmation. At this stage, providing literature about the lives of Saints, which include the prayers they have written, will be appealing to your child’s own prayer life as they begin to reflect on how their faith can be lived.



Key principles addressed in Teachable Moment 1:

1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 6.2.

Teachable Moment 2

Lent

These times are particularly appropriate for spiritual exercises, penitential liturgies, pilgrimages as signs of penance, voluntary self-denial such as fasting and almsgiving, and fraternal sharing of charitable and missionary works.

Catechism of the Catholic Church #1438

Lent is a time to cultivate a deeper spirit of prayer in the family in preparation for Easter. For the 40 days of Lent, the Church encourages pious acts of prayer, almsgiving and fasting, and there are many ways we can engage our children. Regardless of what your children decide to do during Lent, what we must keep in the forefront of our mind is that this period is about making little efforts to cultivate a deeper relationship with Christ to prepare more fully for Easter. With children, we can simply refer to this as *special efforts* during Lent.

As a child, all I knew about this time of year was that I had to ‘give something up.’ My choice of sacrifice was always chocolate. What I did not know was *why* we did this. The perennial question that children always have around Lent is, ‘why do we need to do these things?’ This then becomes the teachable moment in the family. A simple phrase that sums it up easily for children is, ‘*We fast before we feast.*’

Cultivating the Teachable Moment:

It is important to discuss with your child what special effort they might like to do during Lent. A teachable moment, or an opportunity to discuss this, may arise on Shrove Tuesday. I recall Shrove Tuesday in my family home. My mother would spend the evening making pancakes, which we would fill with cheese or jam. Traditionally, this was done to use up all the food items we would not need during Lent. This cooking tradition may become a teachable moment, where you can then discuss what each of you might like to do for Lent.

*If you have established a prayer space or prayer table in your home, it would be a good idea to cover it with a purple covered cloth on Ash Wednesday. This colour signifies a change of season, namely a penitential season and will immediately alert your children to the new phase they are entering during Lent. With young children we call it a time of **preparation**.*

During family prayer on Ash Wednesday, you might have the word ‘Alleluia’ written on a card. You can fold it up, and put the Alleluia away, explaining that this work is not said until Easter.

Education in Lent

Body

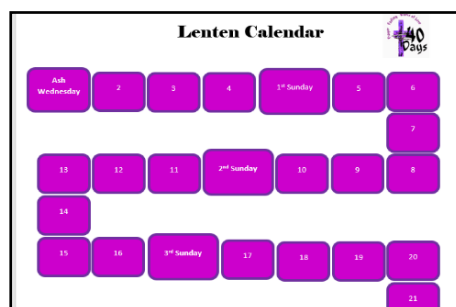


Grain of Wheat – On Ash Wednesday you can plant grains of wheat in a clear jar. Your child can have the job of watering it. In time, the grain cracks open and a strand of wheat grows out. This provides a simple image for your child to observe, but one that is rich in meaning and appealing to their senses. The grain of wheat dying in the earth, which grows and bears fruit, is an image of Jesus' death and resurrection. This symbolic image is particularly helpful when addressing the topic of death and new life.

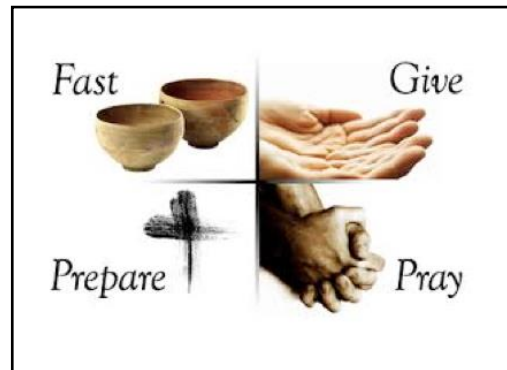


Ash Wednesday – Taking your children to Mass on Ash Wednesday is a particularly important way of observing the beginning of Lent. Everyone present is marked with ashes on their foreheads, which is highly appealing to the young child. It is a physical gesture that enables them to see that something has changed in the Church. Some parishes invite parishioners to bring in their old palms from the previous year, which are then burned into ashes. If this is offered, your child can have the job of bringing the palm to church. This small job gives children a concrete experience, whilst appealing to their senses. Upon returning from Mass you can read the story of Jesus in the desert, which is read on Ash Wednesday.

Create a Calendar – Just as there are Advent calendars prior to Christmas, you can create a Lenten calendar for your children in preparation for Easter. Each day your child can track their journey through Lent, culminating in Holy Week and Easter. It is a concrete way that children can trace their progress throughout the Lenten season. You might like to print this calendar or adapt it. See Appendix 1 for this resource.



Special Efforts: Young children are under no obligation to the rules of fasting and abstinence that is required of adults. However, you might like to encourage small acts that children can do as a way of acknowledging the Lenten season and the preparation for Easter.



Fasting – Perhaps a small gesture like giving up dessert or replacing a soft drink with a glass of water, might be a little way that children can perform an act of fasting.

Prayer – Recalling the prayer ideas from Teachable Moment 1, the child in this stage is familiar with spontaneous prayer or short phrases from Scripture. With this in mind, perhaps using Scripture phrases that relate to Lent might be more appropriate, such as: *Our soul is waiting for the Lord, The Lord is our Help and our Shield, Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord.*

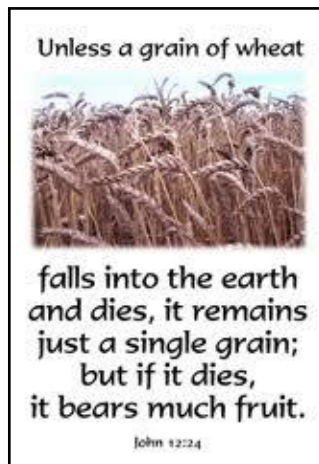
Almsgiving – This need not only be a monetary act. Almsgiving includes any act of giving to others. For the young child, or children in this stage, practical life activities are appealing to their senses and are acts they can accomplish with ease. Thus, encouraging your child to do some extra practical life activities, such as tidying the table, putting dishes away, or helping to clean up, are simple ways that encourage special effort in children during Lent.

Heart

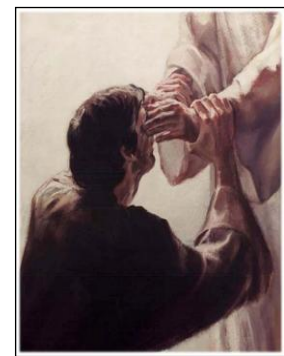


Grain of Wheat – Planting the grain of wheat is a tradition that you can do each year, using different ways to appeal to each stage. Whilst in the previous stage simply planting the seed and discussing its symbolism would be fitting, now a new dimension can be added. At the level of the heart Scripture is appealing to the child, therefore now it would be a good idea to print the words of John 12: 24 for your child to read and reflect on, enabling them to begin to make further connections between the grain of wheat and the Mystery of Life and Death.

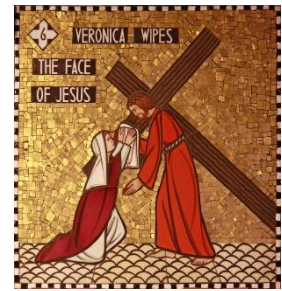
‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.’



Contemplation of Art – As recalled in Teachable Moment 1, art works are appealing to children in this stage. Therefore, finding religious art relating to the life of Jesus can be a great way of preparing for the Resurrection. Through art, children can contemplate images of Christ, particularly those moments leading up to Holy Week and Easter, as recalled in the Sundays of Lent. This can begin from Ash Wednesday with a reading as well as a reflection on the Temptation in the Wilderness.

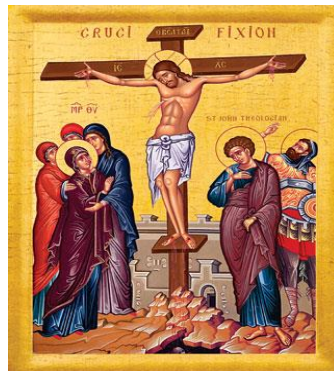


Stations of the Cross – This devotion can be introduced at this stage, and in two ways. The first time your child encounters the Stations of the Cross, you might like to use artistic representations for your child to contemplate. It may be as simple as a picture with the name of the Station. Children can then sort and order them.



The following year, or when your child requires a further challenge, you might like to use the ‘Scriptural Way of the Cross’, including simple Scriptural texts that correspond to each station.

Your child may prefer one of these two representations. In this case, it is important to let them choose the medium that appeals to them most, image or text. Regardless of which medium they choose, it is important to expose them to both Scripture and art because it appeals to the level of the heart.

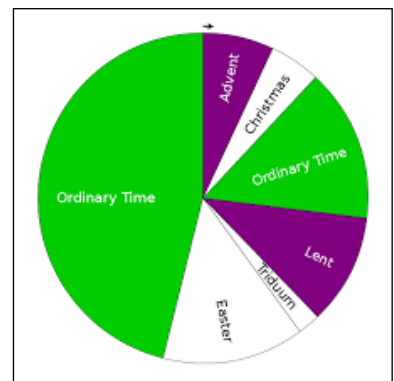


12th Station – Jesus speaks to His Mother and the Disciple

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son." And to the disciple, "Behold, your mother."

*****Tip:** regardless of which Stations of the Cross you use, it is important to always speak of the death and Resurrection as one event.

Seasons of the Church – In the previous stage, a Lenten calendar was suggested as a concrete way to follow the 40 days of Lent. Whilst this can continue each year, another level of depth that can be introduced in this stage is the Liturgical Calendar.



You can cut this out and have your child place it together like a puzzle. This activity will help them to understand the place of Lent within the Liturgical year. As they grow, they will develop better understandings related to the concept of time, and this task will appeal to that need. This Liturgical Season wheel can be used alongside the Lenten calendar. See Appendix 2 for this resource.

Special Efforts: Young children are under no obligation to the rules of fasting and abstinence that is required of adults. However, you might like to encourage small acts that children can do as a way of acknowledging the Lenten season and the preparation for Easter.



Fasting – Perhaps a small gesture, like giving up dessert, or replacing a sweet with a piece of fruit, might be a little way that children can perform an act of fasting. If they are older, they might be able to give up a particular treat during the season of Lent.

Prayer – Recalling the prayer ideas from Teachable Moment 1, the child in this stage is most engaged with Scripture. With this in mind, perhaps encouraging your child to read Scripture related to Lent might be more appropriate, such as the Gospel reading from the Sundays of Lent. They might take up this extra reading during Lent.

Almsgiving – This need not only be a monetary act. Almsgiving includes any act of giving to others. This might include giving up their time to help others, such as reading to a younger sibling, helping them with homework, or doing some extra chores around the house. If your child does receive pocket money, perhaps they might sacrifice part of that to donate to a charity, or perhaps forgo their pocket money during Lent.

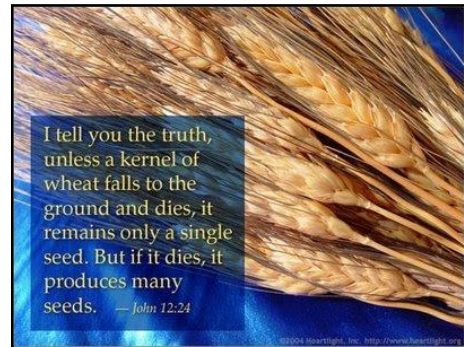
*****Tip:** it is important to always remind children that our special efforts are acts of love. Little efforts ought not be seen as punishments but, on the contrary, as expressions of love for God and neighbour.

Mind



Grain of Wheat – At this stage, your child will become increasingly interested in the Mystery of Life and Death. In the earlier stages, children find this concept challenging. However, once they are at this later stage, they will be more interested in the mysteries surrounding death and new life. As they will now be older, and nearing adolescence, they will begin to have the ability to deepen their understanding of life and death. Providing them with this scripture passage to read independently, will suit their developmental needs.

As they will now begin to have questions about death and life, a biblical approach would be a fitting way to begin to address this topic. At this stage it would be helpful to have your child read the scripture passages relating to the *Grain of Wheat*, as well as the *Death and Resurrection of Christ*. This then provides the child with the useful passages that allow them to independently make connections between the grain and life after death. This passage therefore serves two purposes in the education of faith: Lent and Mortality.

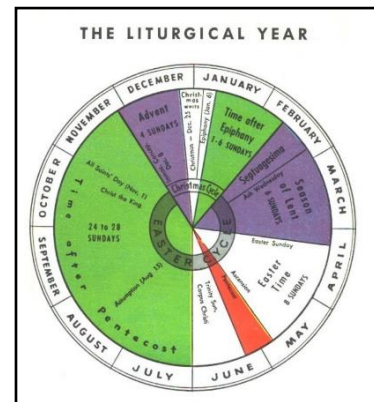


Stations of the Cross – This devotion will continue to appeal to children at this stage, yet they will require more time to reflect on the words they encounter. Providing them with their own printed copy will enable your child to read independently whilst allowing space for personal reflection on this prayer. Selecting a version that includes a reflection of each Station would certainly appeal to children in this stage.

Many parishes offer Stations of the Cross during Lent. If it is available, this would be an ideal opportunity for your child to participate in this devotion. This could perhaps be the “special effort” they consider throughout Lent.



Liturgical Year – In the previous two stages, an activity related to the Liturgical Year is fitting to discuss during Lent. The resource that is suggested now offers another layer of depth, which would appeal to the intellectual needs of a child in this developmental stage. The calendar presented in this resource has added sections, which now included the Months of the Year as well as the duration of each liturgical season. This inclusion of timelines and duration appeals to children at this stage. Whereas in the level of the heart children are absorbed in sequencing events, the level of the mind is more interested in seeking to understand the chronology of events and how they fit together. See Appendix 3 for this resource.



Repeating the same activity as the previous stage, namely cutting out the sections and placing them back together, is a valuable entry point to this task. Once your child is satisfied with this, prompting them to explore each individual section may be the next stage of learning. In addition to this you might encourage your child to focus on one section, namely Lent. They can explore the season in more depth, such as reading about the individual Sundays of Lent in the corresponding Church year, such as Year A, Year B and Year C.

Scripture Study/ Typology Study – At this stage, children develop an interest in history and are capable of being challenged with how events of the past are significant to the faith. Engaging your child in a scripture study, namely Typology, nourishes their relationship with Christ, whilst also appealing to their interest in history.

Typology is an intellectual challenge because it requires your child to think about the connections between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Presenting the right material will assist your child to discover and make the connections themselves. There are several stories they can read during Lent that will enable them to understand the significance of the Paschal Mystery. Below are some examples to provide to your child in their study of passages that foreshadow the New Testament. In each suggestion there is a brief statement, for your information, that explains one aspect of what the story foreshadows. However, it is important to let your child make the connection independently, upon their own reflection, and to remember that there may be more than one example of *foreshadowing* in each passage.

Typology Scripture Study:

Genesis 3

The Origin of Sin and the Fall – In the Old Testament we read about Adam and the origin of sin, which foreshadows Christ as the New Adam who redeemed that sin. The tree in the Fall foreshadows the tree of the Cross. Where life was lost with Adam, it was restored with Christ.

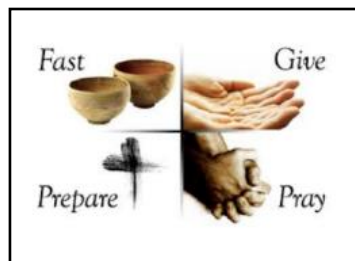
Genesis 22

The Sacrifice of Isaac – This passage foreshadows the sacrifice of Christ. Abraham was asked by God to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Further along we read that Abraham was then spared from having to sacrifice his son. Later in the New Testament we find a similar scenario, yet this time there was a Father who did have to sacrifice his son, Jesus.

Exodus 12

Moses: The Passover– This details the experience of the Jewish people, instituting the Passover prior to crossing the Red Sea. We read about the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb, whose blood the Jewish people would sprinkle on their doorposts, so that the angel of death would pass over their houses and they would be saved. This image is a foreshadow of the sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God, by whose blood we are saved.

Special Efforts:



Fasting – At this stage they may be more inclined to sacrifice something for the entire season of Lent. This is something your child can decide.

Prayer – As mentioned in the section on the Stations of the Cross, this may be a devotion your child can pray during Lent. There may be other prayers they might like to pray, such as the Divine Mercy or a Litany.

Almsgiving – Sacrificing pocket money to a charity is a worthwhile task. Encourage your child to research a charity, choosing one that appeals to them. If your parish is promoting a cause, you might like to encourage your child to support this. If you have an older child, nearing or at adolescence, perhaps they can actively engage in volunteer work.

	<p>Key principles addressed in Teachable Moment 2:</p> <p>1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 6.2.</p>
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Teachable Moment 3

Holy Week and Easter

We are an Easter People and Alleluia is our song!

Pope Saint John Paul II

Holy Week is the most significant week of the liturgical year, reaching its climax with the Triduum and Easter Sunday. Holy Week is filled with an array of beauty in worship and traditions, providing many opportunities for families to pass on the riches of our faith. These events will prompt many questions, leading to teachable moments in your family. Holy Week culminates in what we believe is the Paschal Mystery. That is the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. When discussing the Paschal Mystery with young children, it is important to speak of the death and resurrection as one event. Death *and* resurrection must always be linked as one mystery. For young children, death without resurrection is alarming. Therefore, throughout the week, it is important to keep in mind that the paschal mystery teaches us that death is overcome, life is stronger, and we no longer need to fear.

Cultivating the Teachable Moment:

Throughout Holy Week there are several events that you can participate in as a family, beginning with Palm Sunday. Following this is Holy Thursday, or the Mass of the Lord's Supper. Traditions of washing feet and stripping the altar, will be opportune times that cultivate teachable moments. Good Friday, or the Lord's Passion, will provoke more questions. Holy Saturday and the Easter Vigil follow, which will incite more opportunities to teach. The week culminates with Easter Sunday, and celebrations continue for 50 days. There are many opportunities for teaching the faith this week and in the Easter Season thereafter. However, there are also cultural and familial traditions that are indispensable.

A friend of mine is of a Polish background, and I look forward to seeing her adorned Easter basket each year. The Polish tradition is to arrange a basket of food to be brought to the church on Holy Saturday, to be blessed in anticipation of Easter Sunday.

*Baskets are decorated with white linen and sprigs of greenery, which are symbolic of new life. Inside the baskets are several items, symbolic of the Easter season. **Bread** symbolises Jesus as the bread of life, **Eggs** symbolise new life from the tomb, **Ham** represents joy and abundance, **Salt** reminds people that they are the flavour of the earth, and a **Candle** represents Christ as the Light of the World. This tradition, so rich in symbolism of Christ's resurrection, is one example of how cultural traditions are indispensable in passing on the faith in simple ways. Nurture these traditions as a way of creating teachable moments.*



Education in Holy Week & Easter

Body

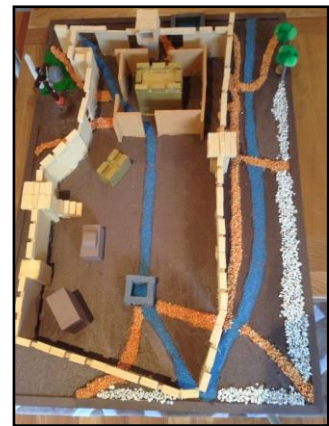


If you have established a prayer space the purple cloth can be replaced with white on Holy Thursday, signifying a change of season, namely a celebratory season

Palm Sunday – Marking the first day of Holy Week, it is a great idea to attend Mass as a family. One of the features of Palm Sunday is the blessing of palms. If possible, encourage your child to hold the palm as the priest processes into the church as this will appeal to their senses. Upon returning from Mass it would be helpful to read the story of Palm Sunday together as a family. It will help young children understand the focus of the day. A tradition of this day is to place the blessed palm atop the crucifix in your home, where it will remain until the following year.

City of Jerusalem – Throughout Holy Week there are several events that take place in Jerusalem. Crafting a map of Jerusalem and pointing out key places will enable your child to understand the concrete reality of the events of Holy Week.

This image is an example of a 3D map of Jerusalem, including places such as the Cenacle, Mount of Olives, and Calvary. It can be used to point out key places in Jerusalem. If you cannot make a map, you can locate one with an internet search: “Jerusalem at the time of Jesus”. Appendix 4 provides details of the image.

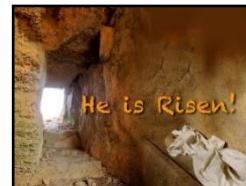
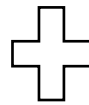


Holy Thursday – Prior to attending Mass it would be a good idea to read the story of the Last Supper to your child. If you have a map of Jerusalem, you can point out the Cenacle as the place of the Last Supper. After reading, you can also ask your child where they have seen this gesture and heard the words, ‘This is my body, this is my blood.’

Attending the Mass of the Lord’s Supper is an important way of entering the Triduum. **The late start** at night is worth highlighting. It commemorates Christ’s last supper, which was in the evening. Pointing out the **change in liturgical colour** from purple to white (or gold) indicates a celebration. If your parish **washes the feet** of 12 people, re-enacting Christ’s gesture to his disciples, this would be engaging for young children to see. It is important then to read the story of the ‘washing of the feet’ to provide a scriptural context of this gesture.

Good Friday – If you have a prayer space in your home, place a red cloth in this area to reflect the liturgical celebration. Red is the colour used for Christ’s Passion, Palm Sunday, Feasts of Martyrs, and Feasts of the Holy Spirit. It signifies shedding of blood and is symbolic of the colour of love. With young children, it is important to emphasise *love*.

Whilst Good Friday commemorates Jesus’ crucifixion it is important to speak of Christ’s death and resurrection as one event, otherwise an excessive focus on death can be traumatic. You can read the story of Good Friday and Easter Sunday, emphasising the point that although Jesus died, God raised him from the dead, and he was alive again.



Holy Saturday – The Mass of the Easter Vigil is quite rich in symbolism, thus there are several points to address with young children:

Blessing of the Fire & Preparation of the Candle – In darkness Mass begins with a burning fire. The new Paschal candle is lit, which represents Jesus Christ as the Light of the World. As the priest processes into the church he proclaims, ‘The Light of Christ.’ From this Paschal candle, every person in the congregation lights their own candle. At this point you can explain (and children will see) that light is stronger than darkness, as life is stronger than death.

Liturgy of the Word – Traditionally, nine readings are read during Mass. Although lengthy, you can simply explain that each of these stories tells us about the wonders of God since the beginning of time.

Liturgy of Baptism – The font is blessed, as is the new water. The paschal candle is submerged into the newly blessed water, and those present will be blessed. Some parishes bottle the blessed water or encourage parishioners to fill their own bottles. This is a beautiful practice, which also appeals to the senses of young children. Your child can bring the blessed water home, and as a family bless the house on Easter Sunday.

***Upon returning from Mass, replace the red with a white cloth and take out the Alleluia!

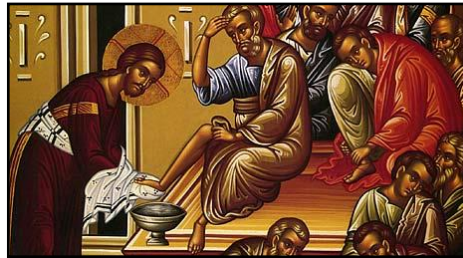
Easter Sunday – Reading the scripture passages that recount the Resurrection is essential for Easter Sunday. Ask your child ‘*I wonder*’ questions such as, ‘I wonder how the women felt as they were nearing the tomb?’ or ‘I wonder how they felt when they realised Jesus wasn’t there?’ These questions encourage their sense of wonder, whilst enabling them to reflect on the mystery of the story.

Heart



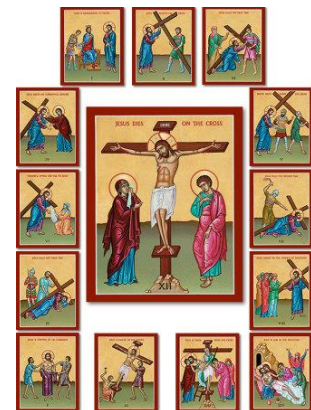
Palm Sunday – The ‘City of Jerusalem’ activity in the previous section will still be relevant in this developmental stage. As an extension, and as a way of appealing to the heart, it would be valuable to have your child read the scriptural passages relating to the places mentioned in Jerusalem. Whereas in the previous stage they physically followed the places Jesus was in Jerusalem, now they can read and contemplate the events corresponding to these places. The passages need only be short and simple. Whilst the stories are lengthy, your child can simply reflect on a few verses. Refer to Appendix 5.

Holy Thursday – Contemplation of Art – As suggested in Teachable Moment 1, art works are appealing to children in this stage. Finding religious art relating to the Last Supper can be a great way of deepening their understanding of Holy Thursday and contemplating the events of this holy day. Allow your child to also read the account of the Last Supper. Both art and Scripture appeal to the heart, the developmental needs of children in this stage.



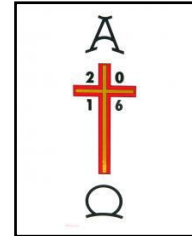
Good Friday – Walking the Stations of the Cross, if your local parish offers this, is a great way of engaging young children. They physically move to each station and can engage with the images of the Stations throughout the church. Alternatively, this can be prayed in the home, but it is important to engage young children with beautiful images they can see and hold.

The Celebration of the Lord’s Passion is another important part of the Triduum. As your child develops further in this stage, engaging them in this liturgy is a valuable experience. During this liturgical celebration, the Passion of the Lord is read and there are parts that the congregation say. This is quite engaging as the words are taken directly from Scripture, and the people are encouraged to read.



Holy Saturday – In preparation for the Vigil Mass, encourage your child to read a shortened version of the *Exsultet*, the Easter Proclamation. If they are unable to read, it can be read to them. A recording of this can also be played so that they can hear it sung. The combination of music and lyrics will certainly appeal to their heart and enable them to reflect deeply on this hymn.

Preparation of the Paschal Candle – As the Paschal candle is lit and is prepared by the priest, you can explain the various marks and gestures:



It is marked with a cross and the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, Alpha (Α) and Omega (Ω), signifying God who is the beginning and the end. The priest draws his finger over the cross, or incises the wax, whilst saying:

Christ yesterday and today, (the vertical beam)
The beginning and the end, (the horizontal beam)
Alpha (the Greek letter Α above the vertical beam of the cross)
And Omega, (the Greek letter Ω below the vertical beam of the cross)

All time belongs to Him, (the first numeral of the year in the upper left)
And all ages; (the second number of the year in the upper right)
To Him be glory and power, (the third on the lower left angle of the Cross)
Through every age and for ever. (the fourth numeral in the lower right)
Amen.

Five grains of incense, symbolising the five wounds of Christ, are inserted into the candle as the priest says:

1. *By his holy*
2. *And glorious wounds*
3. *May Christ our Lord guard*
4. *And keep us*
5. *Amen*

Liturgy of the Word – As the readings are proclaimed during Mass, it may be helpful to give your child use a Missal to follow the words. After Mass, select *one reading only* that your child can reflect on. Then each year, as they develop in this stage, they can reflect on a different reading.

Easter Sunday – Using the scripture suggestions in Appendix 5, and with a map of Jerusalem, select one reading for your child to reflect on. Each year, a different account of the Resurrection can be read. Find artworks related to the Resurrection as another way of appealing to the heart.

Mind



Palm Sunday/Holy Week – At this later stage, children develop an interest in history. Thus, encouraging them to research specific places in Jerusalem will prove to be a useful activity. Further to this, they can research and explore specific historical figures associated with Holy Week, such as King Herod, Pontius Pilate, and Caiaphas. Encouraging this type of study will appeal to your child’s interest in people, places, and historical events, and how they are related.



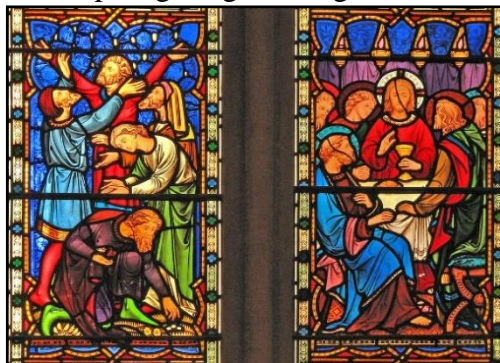
Holy Thursday – Appealing to your child’s interest in history, as mentioned above, is a strategy that can be used again as a way of enabling children to make connections between Holy Thursday and the origin of the Eucharist. Encourage your child to read the Last Supper narratives as recorded in Mt 26: 17 – 30, Mk 14: 12 – 26, Lk 22: 7 – 39. They can also read from 1 Corinthians 11: 23 – 26.

As mentioned in Teachable Moment 2, the study of typology is an intellectual challenge that will engage your child as they progress through this developmental stage. The story from Exodus describing the Manna in the desert, foreshadows of the Eucharist and is appropriate for your child to read during Holy Week. It is important to let your child make the connection independently upon reflection of the reading.

Typology Scripture Study:

Exodus 16

Bread from Heaven – In the Old Testament we read about the miracle of manna in the desert, prefiguring Jesus’ gift of self in the Eucharist.



There are artworks that also depict this typology, which can be found with a simple internet search. The image above depicts the Fall of Manna (on the left) and the Institution of the Eucharist (on the right).

Good Friday – Participating in the Stations of the Cross, as well as the Liturgy of the Lord’s Passion, is appropriate for children at this age. Providing them with readings to follow, or a Missal, will be useful. To assist your child with reflecting more deeply on the Triduum, it would be useful to select appropriate artwork on the Paschal narratives. Allowing them time to reflect on the images and symbols in religious art will enable them to make deeper connections with the Paschal Mystery.

The Adoration of the Lamb in the Ghent Altar piece is an exemplary artwork that will incite wonder and contemplation of the Paschal Mystery



(Close up detail, below)



Holy Saturday – The readings at the Mass of the Easter Vigil include those to be used for a study of typology. This list of readings is not inclusive of all readings but suggests two passages that will be appealing to a child in this developmental stage:

Genesis 1 – 2:1-3 and Genesis 2: 4 - 25

Creation – In the account of Creation in Genesis 1, the first day begins with the creation of *light*. In the Resurrection of Christ, the new creation, a new light is ignited that cannot be extinguished.

In the second account of Creation, Adam (the first born of all creation) is the shadow of Christ who is the first born of the new creation. There is a contrast between Adam (the sinner) and Christ (the one who redeemed the rupture of sin). Christ’s resurrection is a new creation, one that is more complete than the first.

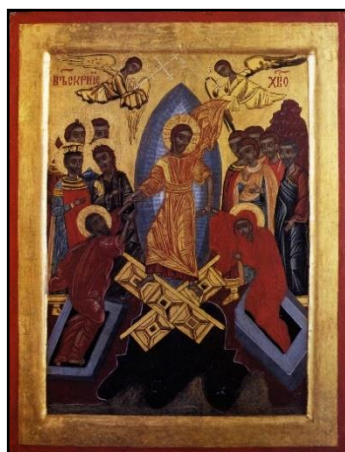
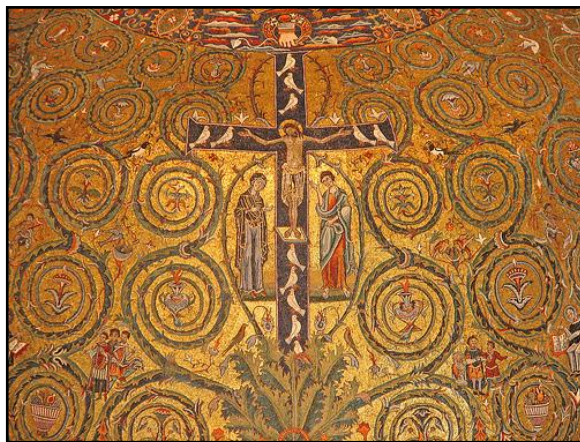
Exodus 13

Crossing the Red Sea – This chapter details the experience of the Jewish departing Egypt. They cross the Red Sea, leaving behind an old life to a completely new life on the other side of the water. This exodus foreshadows baptism, leaving behind an old life and passing through waters before entering a new life. This is particularly significant to read in anticipation of the Vigil, as this reading is proclaimed, and new baptisms take place during this Mass.

Easter Sunday – The Mystery of Life and death is a particular interest to children at this stage. They tend to have a preoccupation with life and mortality. The Resurrection provides the ideal context for discussing the mystery of life and death with your child. This is something that can be revisited throughout the year. Whenever a death occurs, relating it to the Resurrection will prove to be a useful way of discussing life and death with your child.

As previously suggested, artworks are useful resources for deepening reflection on the Resurrection. If your child prefers reading then suggesting texts from the Mass of Easter Sunday, or the readings from the Liturgy of the Hours, can also be useful sources for reflection. The *Exsultet* (the Easter Proclamation) is another useful text, rich in symbolism, that your child can read.

*The Apse mosaic of San Clemente,
Rome*



Key principles addressed in Teachable Moment 3:

1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 6.2.

Teachable Moment 4

Mass

*Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them;
for to such belongs the kingdom of God.*

Luke 18: 16

Taking children to Mass is the most important act of worship that families can partake in. It is, however, one of the most challenging aspects of faith to pass on to children.

Reflecting on my experiences as a teacher, I can recall the many challenges of taking groups of young children to Mass and expecting them to respond appropriately and pray reverently. This is a challenge shared by many parents. However, once I started to explore the developmental needs of children at their different stages of learning, I became more aware of what they needed to know to fully appreciate attending Mass. The younger students I taught began mimicking the priest's actions once they discovered the words and gestures used during Mass. The students in senior grades began taking missals so they could follow along more attentively. Selecting appropriate resources, and structuring lessons around the developmental needs of my students, enabled them to be more engaged when they participated in Mass.

Reflecting on my experiences as a child, the image that comes to mind is the row that we would sit in every week. It was as though we had invisible name tags because that row was always vacant. Of course, that spot was the front row. As an adolescent I dreaded this weekly ritual of sitting in the front, yet as a young child I loved this spot. Upon reflection, I can see why I loved it as a child: I could see what was happening.

Cultivating the Teachable Moment:

Do not be afraid to seat yourself at the front of the church. When I recently asked a priest for his suggestion for supporting parents, daunted by the challenge of attending Mass with children, he simply said 'Encourage them to sit in the front.' If children cannot see, they will become quickly distracted. Yet if they can see some of the things on the sanctuary or altar, these will become the tools (or the teachable moments) that you will be able to refer to.

Throughout this sequence of lessons there are several suggestions that I have previously used in a classroom setting but have adapted for use in the home. Regardless of the resources and tasks you engage with, it is essential to remember that the most important teachable moment is the Mass itself.

Education in the Liturgy

Body



Liturgical Colours – Pointing out the liturgical colours will immediately engage a child with the celebration of Mass. Once in the church you can point out the colour or ask your child to identify it if the colour is visible, which will be most apparent in the chasuble the priest wears. There are four liturgical colours: green, violet, white (or gold) and red. In the earliest stages, children can simply become familiar with the colours, and identifying when they have changed. Once they have grasped this, you can give a simple explanation of the colours:



- **Green** – *Ordinary time* – we grow in our knowledge of Jesus.
- **Violet** – *Penitential time* – we are preparing for a feast.
- **White/Gold** – *Celebration time* – we are celebrating a feast, such as Christmas, Easter, Holy Thursday, Saint’s Feast Days.
- **Red** – *Memorial of love and sacrifice* – we remember the love of Jesus on Palm Sunday and Good Friday, the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and the Feast Days of Martyrs.

Sign of the Cross & Holy Water – As mentioned in Teachable Moment 1, there are several ways of supporting children with learning the Sign of the Cross. At church, this same process applies. Begin by holding their hand, placing it into the font, and supporting them with making the Sign of the Cross. Once they master this, allow them to do this gesture independently upon entering and departing the church.

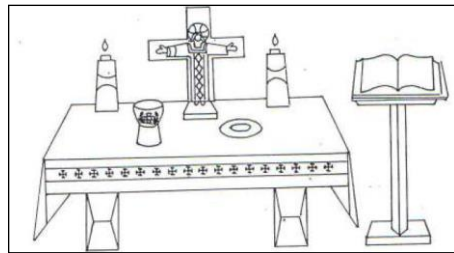


Genuflection & Kneeling – These gestures require much patience and practise, yet they involve whole-body movements that appeal to the bodily/concrete needs of children. These actions teach children an important reality, the presence of Jesus in the tabernacle. As you teach these gestures, it is important to face the tabernacle. This helps children make sense of why they genuflect and to whom they are genuflecting. You can explain that this is a gesture to show Jesus our love. When we make ourselves smaller, it tells God he is great. During the consecration it is important to help children practise kneeling. Again, learning the action helps them to become aware of the presence of Jesus at Mass.

Altar – Begin with teaching your child the names of the vessels, vestments and furniture found on the sanctuary. Each time you attend Mass, you only need to focus on one particular object.

First, point out the object and teach your child the name of that item. **Then**, before or after Mass, you can take your child for a walk around the sanctuary and ask if they can point out where that object is.

Finally, and perhaps on another occasion, point to the object and see if your child can recall the name. This threefold structure will support your child in remembering the names of the objects found in a church, and it can be revisited each time you attend Mass. Appendix 6 has a list of objects, along with images so that your child can refer to them.



**Objects on the
Altar
(Appendix 6)**

Gestures – In a similar way to presenting the altar objects, you can also introduce the names of specific gestures seen in the Mass.

First, quietly whisper and point out the gesture for your child to see.

Then, after Mass you can name the gesture and see if your child can recall the action. The next time you attend Mass, prior to its commencement, remind your child to look out for that particular action.

Finally, on another occasion, make the action and see if your child can recall the name of that gesture. Appendix 6 has a list of these gestures.

Scripture – As a way of preparing your child for their next stage of development, it is important to help them begin to understand why we go to Mass. Two stories for Scripture will assist with this:

The Good Shepherd: After reading this story, discuss how the Good Shepherd knows his sheep and he knows them by name. He loves them, protects them, and cares for them. The Good Shepherd is Jesus and he calls us, just as the shepherd call his sheep. When we go to Mass we are in the presence of the Good Shepherd.



The Last Supper: Upon reflection of this story, you can discuss Jesus' words 'Do this in memory of me' You can then explain that we go to Mass to remember Jesus.

Heart



Vessels and Furniture – Once children have mastered the task of naming the objects used during Mass, they will begin to ask questions about why these things are used, or what purpose they serve. At this stage, you can offer children simple explanations. Then, as in the previous stage, they can engage in a matching activity using names, pictures, and explanations. See Appendix 6 for this task.

Chalice



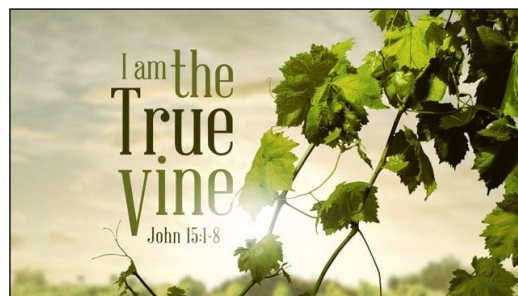
This is the special cup that the priest uses to pour water and wine into, which becomes the Blood of Christ.

Gestures – Following the structure of the ‘Vessels and Furniture’ activity, revisit the names of the gestures at Mass with brief explanations of what they mean. Appendix 6 has the details of this task.

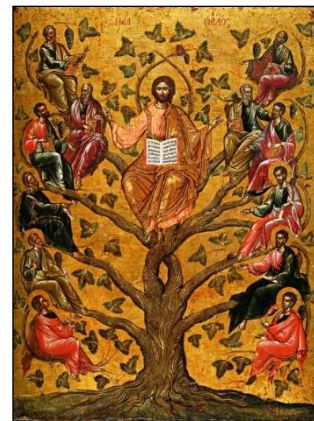
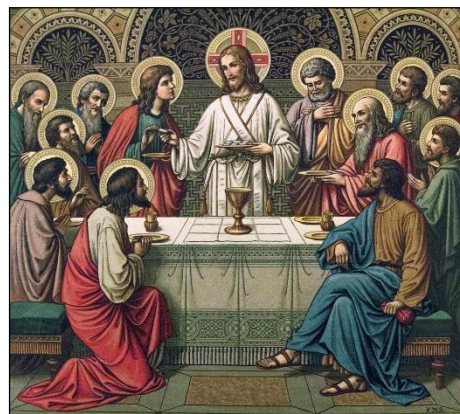
Scripture – As a way of appealing to the heart, and helping your child to understand some of the reasons why we go to Mass encourage them to read and reflect on the following passages:

The True Vine - Invite them to read the passage of the True Vine and to reflect on the words of Jesus. This passage provides an image, which can be further enhanced if you have a plant. You can explain that Jesus is like the vine (or the plant), and we are the branches. If you break off a branch, it becomes disconnected. When we go to Mass, we remain with Jesus just as the branches remain part of the vine.

The Last Supper – Revisit the story of the Last Supper, as suggested in Teachable Moment 3. This will provide the basis for your child’s understanding of the origin of the Eucharist. Meditate on the words *Do this in remembrance of me* (Lk 22:19).



Contemplation of Art – To further develop your child’s appreciation of Mass, and to appeal to the heart, the use of sacred art is indispensable. A quick internet search of ‘Catholic Mass’ or ‘The Last Supper’ will provide you with rich imagery that will appeal to your child. Below are some examples.



Hymns – At this stage, children may be developing their reading ability. Providing them with the lyrics for hymns sung at Mass will engage them in the liturgy whilst giving them words to reflect on. There are several ways of doing this. You can do a simple search on the internet for liturgical hymns and provide them with these lyrics at home as a way of praying. Alternatively, they can read directly from the hymn book or parish bulletin, whilst at Mass. This will encourage them to join in with singing the hymns during Mass.

First Missal – To further engage your child with the Mass, now would be a fitting time to provide them with their first Missal. It need only be a simple Missal, with the prayers and the responses. This will support your child’s understanding of the parts of the Mass, as well as remembering their prayers and responses.

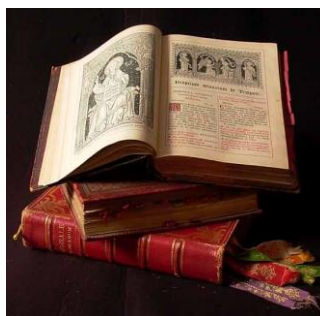
Mind



Structure of the Mass – At this stage, your child will begin seeking a framework for their thoughts, an overarching structure of how things fit together. Once they know the names of objects and gestures, as well as the purpose these serve, you can begin to challenge your child with a deeper understanding of the *structure* of the Mass.

- **Liturgy of the Word** – This is essentially the first part of the Mass. We hear readings from Scripture, related to the Proper of the day. The priest or deacon then gives a homily, a reflection or instruction based on the readings.
- **Liturgy of the Eucharist** – This part of the Mass begins with the Offertory, leading into the Eucharistic Prayer, and culminating in Holy Communion.
- **The Ordinary** – These are the parts of Mass that do not change. These prayers include Kyrie (Lord Have Mercy), Gloria, The Creed, Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy), and the Lamb of God.
- **Propers of the Mass** – These are the parts that vary each day, or are specific to each Mass, which include the Scripture readings, Entrance Antiphon, the Collect, Communion Antiphon, and the Post Communion prayer.

Full Missal – To support your child in understanding that parts of the Mass, you can now provide them with a full Missal. Such Missals include the propers of the Mass, which will enable your child to follow the readings and the prayers at any Mass they attend.



Liturgy as Memorial – At this developmental stage, a new prayer can be introduced, *The Memorial Acclamation*. After the words of Consecration, the priest says, *The Mystery of Faith*. In response we acclaim, ‘*We proclaim your death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.*’ This phrase is rather striking to children in this developmental stage. It synthesises the mystery of salvation, through Christ’s death and Resurrection, which is made present in the Eucharist. The words ‘*until you come again*’ indicate the significance of our worship as future-oriented, awaiting Christ’s coming.

Synthesising at a more advanced level – As your child advances through this stage, they will require further depth in their understanding and appreciation of the Mass. Below are some suggestions of topics or tasks that will be appealing to your child as the mature in this stage.

Eucharistic Prayers – The Eucharistic Prayer is the high point of the Liturgy of the Eucharist. At this time, the priest acts *In Persona Christi*, in the person of Christ. Through prayers of thanksgiving, acclamation, and the consecration, the gifts become the Body and Blood of Christ. The Eucharistic prayer, rich in word and deed, has several variations. There are many Eucharistic prayers for Ordinary time, Lent, Advent, Christmas, Easter, Feasts of Saints and Martyrs, as well as other liturgical celebrations. Encourage your child to investigate and reflect on these prayers. If they have a Missal, these prayers will be included. Alternatively, an internet search can provide them with the words of these beautiful prayers, which synthesise salvation history and make holy the gifts brought for consecration.



Prayer Before & After Mass – Prayerful silence remains an important need for children at this stage. Now that they are becoming more aware of the significance of Mass, it is valuable to encourage them to arrive at the church before the liturgy begins. Encourage them to spend time preparing themselves, offering their prayer intentions for Mass. This need only be a few minutes. They can also spend time reading the readings of the day.

In a similar way, it is important to encourage your child to remain in the Church for a few minutes after Mass. This is a time of thanksgiving, thanking God for the gift of Himself and the gift of Mass. These moments help your child to recollect their prayers and the things they heard during Mass.

Key principles addressed in Teachable Moment 4:

1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 6.2.

Teachable Moment 5

Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist

The sacraments of Christian initiation - Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist - lay the foundations of every Christian life.

Catechism of the Catholic Church # 1212

In light of Easter and Christ's ascension into heaven, it is an opportune time to speak to children about the way in which Christ remains with us through the sacraments. The three Sacraments of Initiation are the best starting point for this discussion as your child will have experienced at least one, namely Baptism. Through Baptism children, and so too the family, are incorporated into Christ, thus it is the best starting point for sacramental catechesis.

Upon reflection on my teaching experience, there were distinct ways that this topic was taught to different year levels. For children in their early years, concrete objects were the most helpful teaching aids. Sacraments were obscure events and young children were simply interested in the sights, sounds and scents that engaged them with the sacraments. As I taught children in the middle and senior years of primary school, teaching methods changed as these students were in fact preparing to receive sacraments. They were seeking to make connections between what they saw and how it related to their own lives. This sequence of activities is not intended to replace a school curriculum or parish program. Rather it is an aid for parents, intended to complement the work children are already doing in preparation for their respective sacraments.

The Catechism succinctly summarises the three sacraments of initiation stating, 'The faithful are born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and receive in the Eucharist the food of eternal life. By means of these sacraments of Christian initiation, they thus receive in increasing measure the treasures of the divine life and advance toward the perfection of charity.'

Cultivating the Teachable Moment:

Begin with telling stories of your child's baptism, sharing photos, and showing their baptismal candle and white garment. This will be an excellent starting point for a discussion of the sacraments. This task will raise many questions for your child, thus creating a teachable moment, which you will be able to address with the simple activities listed below. By the time children reach the age of preparation for receiving their First Holy Communion, as well as Confirmation, more questions will arise. These questions, whilst challenging and deep, will provide opportunities for many teachable moments related to the sacraments.

Education in the Sacraments

Body



Receiving the Light of Christ – The most fitting time to introduce baptism is soon after Easter. However, this is not a strict rule. If there is a baptism in your family, and children happen to ask questions, use this as a teachable moment to begin the conversation about Baptism.

As a way of preparing to discuss baptism, point out the Paschal Candle in your church, which is meant to remind us of Jesus. Point out the symbols on it, *Alpha* and *Omega*, and explain that Jesus is the beginning and the end. There is a *cross*, but Jesus is not on the cross, because he is risen. There is a *number for this year*, because Jesus is still with us after all this time. You can share this story below as a way of preparing to discuss baptism.



A brief recount of the life of Christ:

People waited for a long time for someone who would bring light to the darkness. God promised his people that he would send them someone who would bring that light. Jesus was that person. When he was born, angels came surrounded by light. A star appeared in the sky and three wise men followed its light to find him. Jesus, who was the light of the world had come to earth to be with us. People could see the light shining from him. He made blind people see and many other miracles. He had come to bring light to the world. Some people did not like what he said, and they crucified him. When he died on the cross the light was put out. But the Light of Jesus was stronger than death. Three days later, he came back to life, and the light was with us again.

God had a plan for this light to grow and become brighter and brighter until it covers the whole earth. He told people to spread the light through Baptism. Many people have baptised ever since Jesus came back to life. When you were baptised, you received that light of Christ.

If you have your child's baptismal candle, show them, and explain how it was lit from the Paschal candle. They received this candle at their baptism with the words, '*Receive the light of Christ.*'



Baptism – Introduce the *material elements* of the sacrament. At this stage children are attracted to concrete objects that appeal to their senses. Thus, teach them the names of the objects, actions and words associated with the sacrament. If you have photographs of your child’s baptism, below is a list of items to point out. If you have these objects, such as the candle or white garment, share them with your child.

<i>Object/Action</i>	<i>What happens during the Rite</i>
Small cross	The priest traces the sign of the cross on the child’s forehead
Oil of Catechumens	The priest anoints the child’s chest with this oil
The Bible	We listen to the Word of God
Baptismal Font	This is where the child is baptised
Outstretched Hands	The priest stretches his hand over the water
Water is Poured	The priest pours water on the child’s head 3 times
Oil of Chrism	The child is anointed a second time, on their head
White Garment	A white garment is placed on the child
Candle	The child’s candle is lit from the Paschal Candle
Blessing of the Parents	The priest blesses the parents




Eucharist – As suggested in Teachable Moment 4, *The Mass*, there are several material elements that can be explored as a way of developing an understanding of the Eucharist. The activities suggested in that chapter will lay the foundations of their understanding of the Eucharist.

To deepen their knowledge of the sacrament in this stage, it would be fitting to read *The Last Supper*. This will enable them to begin making connections between the Last Supper and the Eucharist.

Heart



The Symbols and Gestures of Baptism – Once children have satisfied their learning of naming the material elements of the sacrament, they will need to be challenged with activities that help them understanding the meaning of these objects and actions. At this stage, you can support your child by providing simple explanations of the gestures of baptism. Refer to Appendix 7 for a suggested task. Here is a sample:

Symbols	Image	Explanation
Oil of Catechumens		This is the first anointing. The priest anoints the child's chest with this oil as he says, <i>I anoint you with the oil of salvation in the name of Christ our Saviour, who lives and reigns forever and ever.</i>

Sequencing the Rite of Baptism – At this stage, children begin to develop an interested in how things fit together. To appeal to this developmental need, you can engage them with a task of sequencing the parts of the Rite of Baptism. Appendix 7 provides details on how the picture cards and caption cards can be used to implement this task.

Scripture – *The Baptism of Jesus* – As a way of appealing to heart, encourage your child to read and reflect on the scriptural account of Jesus' baptism. This can be further enhanced up with contemplation of sacred art related illustrating the Baptism of Jesus.



Synthesis of the Mass – As suggested in Teachable Moment 4, *The Mass*, there are several activities that children can engage with to learn about the material elements of the sacrament. In Teachable Moment 4 children learned the names of the gestures and vessels used during Mass, whereas now the aim is to deepen the child’s understanding of how these aspects come together. At this stage, as with the Sacrament of Baptism, they can sequence the parts of the Mass. This will enable them to synthesise the parts of the Mass and see how the material elements fit together and culminate with the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Refer to Appendix 8 with a suggested task.

Scripture – As a way of appealing to the level of the heart, it is important to encourage the reading of scripture. As suggested in Teachable Moment 4, *The Mass*, there are two key passages that help children understand the Eucharist, *The Last Supper* and *The True Vine*.

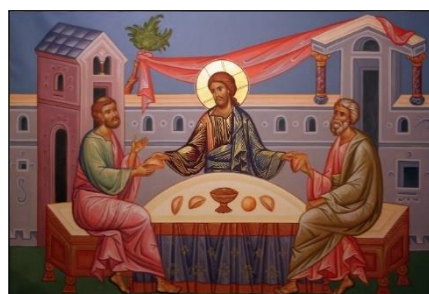
The Last Supper – this passage details the origin of the Eucharist.

The True Vine – this story illustrates that way we remain with Jesus through the sacraments, just as the branches remain part of the vine.

There is a third passage to include at this stage to further develop your child’s understanding of the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Road to Emmaus – this account teaches the important point that Jesus is known to us through the action of breaking bread. After his resurrection, Jesus’ disciples no longer recognised him. It was after their walk that the disciples finally recognised Jesus through the breaking of the bread. In this way, we can help children understand that Christ is with us in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Contemplation of Art – To further develop your child’s understanding of the scripture related to the Eucharist, and to develop their sense of contemplation, it is important to reiterate the use of sacred art.



Mind



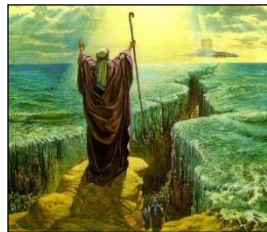
The Sacrament of Baptism – At this level, children will have a sound idea of the parts of Baptism, as well as the meaning of the different gestures and symbols used during the Rite. Now is an appropriate time to link their understanding of Baptism with scripture. As suggested in previous Teachable Moment's, the study of typology is appropriate for children at this stage. Encouraging children to read the stories suggested below, will enable them to make links with scripture and sacrament.

Genesis 6 - 8

Noah and the Flood – These chapters narrate the story of Noah and the Flood. In chapter six we read about the impact of sin and corruption. As the narrative continues, Noah demonstrates obedience and faithfulness to the Lord, as floods of water cleanse the earth. The story of the Flood illustrates how sin is cleansed by water, thus foreshadowing Baptism. This theme is explored again in 1 Peter 3: 20 – 21.

Exodus 13

Crossing the Red Sea – This chapter details the experience of the Jewish exodus from Egypt. They cross the Red Sea, leaving behind an old life to a completely new life on the other side of the water. This exodus foreshadows baptism, leaving behind an old life and passing through waters before entering a new life.



Eucharist – At this level, children understand the parts of the Mass, as discussed in Teachable Moment 4. They are also aware of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. To deepen their appreciation of the Eucharist now would be an appropriate time to introduce your child to Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

The first step is to begin with short periods of adoration, allowing time for children to simply sit in silence. Encourage your child to have a 'heart to heart', speaking as well as listening to the voice of God. If appropriate, and if your child develops interest in this form of prayer, you can encourage them to take prayer books, as well as stories of the lives of saints, to read whilst they are in adoration.



Confirmation – By now, your child may be preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation. These suggestions are intended to compliment the work that your child may already be doing as part of their sacramental preparation. These activities will merely supplement their learning.

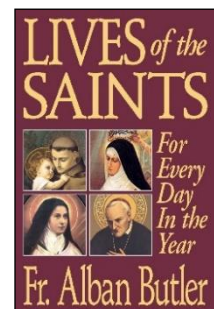
Confirmation is the third Sacrament of Initiation. It completes Baptism and fully initiates members of the Church. There are many similarities between Baptism and Confirmation that can be discussed with your child. At Confirmation, candidates renew their Baptismal promises, which they now declare for themselves. Anointing with Chrism, which happened at Baptism, is repeated at Confirmation. Now, the candidate is confirmed with the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Candidates are confirmed with the words, ‘Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit’ and are thus called to use these gifts to serve the Church.



Service Project – Encourage your child to explore a missionary outreach of interest. There may be opportunities within your parish. As a response to their Confirmation, they may like to use their gifts to serve others in their chosen outreach. Encouraging such activities highlights the importance of offering practical service to others.

Explanation of the Gifts of the Spirit – As your child learns more about Confirmation, encourage them to learn about the gifts of the Holy Spirit; *wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, fear of the Lord*. The perfections of these gifts are their fruits; *charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity*. Encourage your child to become aware of how their gifts can bear these fruits. Perhaps focus on one per week, so your child can become conscious of how they are using their gifts.

Research the life of a saint – In anticipation of their Confirmation, children are asked to nominate a Saint whose name they will take when they are confirmed. For your child, this saint will become a model for living out the faith. Encourage your child to read about the lives of Saints. This will enable them to become familiar with their heavenly friends, and perhaps they will be inspired by a particular saint.



Key principles addressed in Teachable Moment 5:

1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 6.2.

Teachable Moment 6

Sacraments of Healing: Penance and Anointing of the Sick

The Lord Jesus Christ, physician of our souls and bodies, who forgave the sins of the paralytic and restored him to bodily health, has willed that his Church continue, in the power of the Holy Spirit, his work of healing and salvation, even among her own members.

Catechism of the Catholic Church # 1421

The quote above, which is taken directly from the Catechism, describes the purpose of the two sacraments of healing. Both Penance and Anointing of the sick, are bestowed upon us to continue Christ's work of healing and restoration.

The first sacrament of healing, Penance, requires moral formation. In its earliest stages, this begins with training in self-discipline. Children can apply this discipline to care for themselves and their immediate environment. Repeating such activities leads to virtue and is thus the basis of future moral action. Once these foundations have been laid, children will need to move on to the next stage, which attends to the heart. They will need to develop their understanding of the motives for morality, namely love. A heart capable of love, is a heart capable of moral effort. As children progress to their next developmental stage, they will begin to intellectualise the matters of morality. Caution must be taken at this stage. If children are offered lengthy sets of rules, there is a risk of making them needlessly anxious. They will take these rules seriously and, if they break one, will feel excessive guilt. To address this, keep rules short and simple, refer to virtues rather than vices, and always emphasise God's love rather than their error.

What becomes apparent in this natural order of moral formation, is that it begins with the body, proceeds to the heart, and rests in the mind. This threefold process, which underlies each Teachable Moment, is **paramount** in moral formation. Following this order will provide a useful framework for supporting children in their understanding of morality

Cultivating the Teachable Moment:

*Teaching children about morality and confession is a daunting task for many parents. Often, it is assumed that teaching the Commandments, followed by an Examination of Conscience, will suffice. However, the most important aspect of this lesson is **love**. Create opportunities to speak of God's love. It is what motivates us to love God in return and to love our neighbour. When your children encounter difficult situations, or moral dilemmas, a teachable moment arises. Simply ask questions such as, 'how can you show love to God in that situation?' or, 'which action leads you to show love for God or love for neighbour?'*

Education in the Reconciliation

Body



Practical Life Activities – Because children in their early years are not yet capable of moral reason, it is important to train them in the good habits of self-discipline. Acquiring good habits will form the foundations for future moral actions. Engage young children in activities that require them to care for themselves and their environment, including:

<i>Care of Self</i>	<i>Care of Environment</i>
Hair brushing	Tidying the table
Teeth brushing	Folding laundry
Getting dressed	Dusting
Blowing nose	Sweeping
Food preparation	Watering plants



Training in Grace and Courtesy – To further develop your child’s sense of self-discipline, encourage acts of grace and courtesy. This includes developing good habits in the manner they move and speak. These acts show courtesy and concern for others, behaviours that ultimately lay the foundation for future moral action.

<i>Movement</i>	<i>Words</i>
Sharing	Please
Gentle hands	Thank you/You’re welcome
Clean up after myself	May I?
Take turns	Excuse me
Hold the door for others	Can I help?



Note – These activities need to be explicitly & repetitively taught. Model the behaviour, name the words, and gently remind whenever required.

Heart



Primacy of Love – The most important aspect of relating to the heart is love. If children are to understand what to bring to confession, then they first must come to understand love as it is the basis of all moral actions.

Sharing stories of the lives of saints, and seeing love in action, can support children in understanding the primacy of love. Further to this, children must come to know the love of God.



Scripture – Several passages in scripture enable children to recognise the love of God, and the love he has for his children. The suggestions below are recommended for children to read as they touch the hearts of readers and enable them to see the love of God.

The Good Shepherd – John 10: 1 – 11

The Found Sheep – Luke 15: 4 – 6

The Wolf and the Hireling – John 10: 11 – 14

Psalms 23 – Psalm 23: 1 – 4

The True Vine – John 15: 1 - 5

Mercy – In preparation for Penance, scripture is indispensable for teaching children about mercy. The focus on God's mercy helps children understand the relationship God has with those who seek his mercy. There are three passages that enable children to learn the mercy of God:

The Forgiving Father – 15:11-24

The Lost Coin – Luke 15:8-9

The Centurion's Servant – Matthew 8: 5 – 10, 13

Morality – The reading of moral passages will enable children to reflect on their own actions. To support your child's reflection, you can pose questions such as, 'Who showed love in the story? How was love shown? Was love shown to God or neighbour?' The moral passages include:

The Good Samaritan – Luke 10:30-37

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector – Luke 18:9-14

The Insistent Friend - Luke 11:5-8

The Debtors – Matthew 18:23-34

The Sower – Matthew 13:3-8

Moral Maxims of Jesus – Prior to making a confession, children will require support to determine what they can discuss in the sacrament. At this initial stage, a child can be led to examine their conscience through reading and reflecting on the maxims of Jesus. Focussing on maxims rather than on self enables children to focus on moral law. Sophia Cavalletti, renowned catechist, and co-founder of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, suggested 12 maxims to share with children:

“Love your enemies.” Matthew 5:44

“I give you a new commandment: Love one another as I have loved you.” John 13:34

“Do good to those who hate you.” Luke 6:27

“When you pray, go into a room by yourself, shut the door and pray to your Father in private.” Matthew 6:6

“Ask and you will receive. Speak and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened.” Matthew 7:7.

“Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 6:19

“You must be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Matthew 5:48

“Say yes when you mean yes and no when you mean no.” Matthew 5:37

“I do not say forgive seven times, but seventy times seven.” Matthew 7:22

“Always treat others the way you would have them treat you.” Matthew 7:12

“Give when you are asked to give and do not turn your back on someone who wants to borrow.” Matthew 5:42

“Pray for those who persecute you.” Matthew 5:44

These maxims can be printed and cut out individually. Each night, perhaps during prayer time, invite your child to choose a maxim and reflect on how they may or may not have followed that maxim during their day. This becomes an excellent opportunity to examine their day, thinking about how they show love to God and others, and what they might like to share in Reconciliation.

Contemplation of Art – Another way of appealing to the heart in relation to this sacrament is the use of sacred art. Sourcing images that relate to the scripture suggestions, will further engage children at the level of the heart.



Mind



Scripture – At this stage, you can challenge your child with scriptural passages that require deeper reflection about the demands on our moral life. At this stage of developmental children can be encouraged to read these parables, which have more demanding requirements.

The Parable of the Debtors – Mt 18: 21-35

The Labourers in the Vineyard - Mt 20:1-16

The Parable of the Wedding Feast – Mt 22: 1-14

The Parable of the Ten Bridesmaids – Mt 25: 1 - 12

The Parable of the Talents – Mt 25: 14-30



Examination of Conscience – At this stage, your child may have already participated in the sacrament of Reconciliation. In the previous stage, the maxims were an appropriate starting point. As children mature, they will need a more suitable examination of conscience, which can be easily located with an internet search. There are specific examinations for teenagers or young children. It is important to select an examination of conscience that is age appropriate.

Scriptural Examination of Conscience – Using scripture as the basis of an examination of conscience is quite useful. You can encourage your child to put themselves in the place of a character in the stories. After reading the parable of the debtors you may ask, *Did I forgive as the Lord forgive?*



The Ten Commandments – Often, we can rush too quickly to the Commandments as a way of preparing children in their examination of conscience. However, it is a complex set of rules that are difficult for young children to interpret. Thus, the Ten Commandments can be introduced at this stage. They can be discussed in relation to the way we ought to deal with others. The Commandments can be understood if you first discuss rules of fairness that we naturally know, such as respect others, respect property, avoid violence. Such ‘natural laws’ can then be likened to the Commandments; *Honour your father and mother, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shall not kill*. If discussed in this context, the Commandments will provide a useful framework for children.

The Beatitudes – You can also encourage your child to read the Beatitudes and use these as the basis for an examination of conscience. Rephrase the Beatitudes so that they can be asked as questions, ‘*Am I pure in heart? Have I been a peacemaker?*’



Following the Beatitudes can be a focus on *virtues*: prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude. These need only be brief mentions, but you can then encourage your child to contemplate these four and how they might live out these virtues. Encourage your child to read the lives of saints who may exhibit these particular moral virtues, which may also motivate them to live out these traits.

Anointing of the Sick – Children at this developmental stage become more aware of their mortality and have deeper questions about life and death. Now is a fitting time to discuss the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Anointing can be administered as one of the three last sacraments that a person can receive in preparation for death. It is a sacrament that can be administered to those who are gravely ill, and in danger of death.

Discussing this sacrament does not require extensive explanation. However, it will provide comfort to children as it reassures them of life after death particularly as they may encounter the death of a loved one. It is important to emphasise the graces of this sacrament: strength, peace, and courage to overcome the difficulties of illness. You can also briefly discuss the way that this sacrament completes our conformity to the death and resurrection of Christ.

Key principles addressed in Teachable Moment 6:

1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 6.2.

Teachable Moment 7

Death and Everlasting Life

We firmly believe, and hence we hope that, just as Christ is truly risen from the dead and lives forever, so after death the righteous will live forever with the risen Christ and he will raise them up on the last day.

Catechism of the Catholic Church # 989

Throughout my years of working with young children in schools, a question that arose several times among parents was, ‘how do I speak to my child about the death of a loved one?’ For many parents, this was a daunting task. Trying to find the words to explain death to young children was a challenge, particularly when adults themselves were grieving.

We are quite blessed, for our faith provides the means of coping with death. The quote above succinctly explains how Christ, the model of our humanity, died and rose again to pave the path for us. Teachable Moment 2 (Lent) coupled with Teachable Moment 3 (Holy Week and Easter) provides a foundation for understanding the notion of death and resurrection. If these lessons are followed, they will provide a useful basis for helping children understand that there is life after death.

This Teachable Moment addresses the topic of death and everlasting life. It is brief, as the previously mentioned Teachable Moments have already provided useful activities.

Cultivating the Teachable Moment:

There are two ways to cultivate the teachable moment on Death and Everlasting life. The moment may arise in relation to the death a loved one. Children will have their questions about what happens to that person, and there will be suggestions for activities that address these situations.

The second way of cultivating a teachable moment is to regularly draw your children’s attention to suffering or death. This need not be a morbid focus, but may simply arise during family prayer times, where you can pray for those who are suffering or have died. Pope John Paul II, aware of the value of families praying for those who are suffering, wrote:

“The parents’ mission as educators also includes teaching and giving their children an example of the true meaning of suffering and death. They will be able to do this if they are sensitive to all kinds of suffering around them and, even more, if they succeed in fostering attitudes of closeness, assistance and sharing towards sick or elderly members of the family.” (Evangelium Vitae #92)

Education in Death and Everlasting Life

Body



Task - Grain of Wheat

A concrete activity that helps children contemplate the mystery of life and death is the task related to the grain of wheat, which was explained in Teachable Moment 2. If your child has not yet engaged with this task, now is an opportune moment to read the scripture and plant the grain of wheat. If they have already engaged with this task, remind your child of this scripture. Ask them if they can recall the meaning of the grain of wheat. Remind your child that through death there is new life.

Scripture - John 12:24

Once your child has already engaged with the grain of wheat activity, and as they grow older, you may read the scripture verse together: *Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.*

If an explanation is required, you can discuss how the grain of wheat represent Christ, whose death bore fruit. You can then explain that just as Christ died and rose again, so too will life come after the death of a loved one.

Prayer - Psalms and Scriptures

As mentioned in Teachable Moment 1, at this stage simple phrases from scripture are useful for prayer times. You can locate simple psalms or passages that can be used during family prayer, which will help children pray for those who are suffering or have died. The words need only be simple, and you can pray them aloud together:

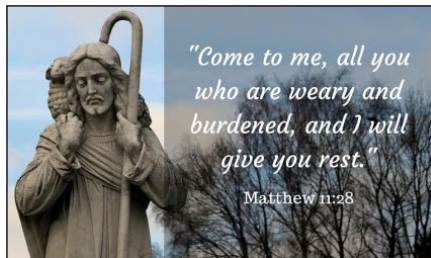
Psalms 147:3 *He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds*

Psalms 56: 3 *But when I am afraid, I will put my trust in you*

Mt 11: 28 *Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*

Isaiah 41: 10 *Fear not, for I am with you*

John 11: 25 *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life"*



Heart



Task - Contemplation of Art

As suggested in each chapter, the heart is nourished with visual stimuli, such as art. A search for “resurrection of the dead” or “the communion of saints” can result in many images that depict the Church on earth and the Church in heaven. This then teaches the point that the Universal Church extends beyond our earthly realm into the heavenly realm. Discussing the Communion of Saints, our heavenly friends, is a way of explaining the reality of life after death and our ultimate goal.



This painting illustrates the disputation of the Holy Sacrament. It also depicts the notion of the Church as One, connecting both earth and heaven.

Scripture - For a scriptural introduction to the Last Things, there are two passages that you can encourage your child to read and reflect upon.

Jesus the Resurrection and the Life: Jn 11:25 – 27

This passage enables us to reflect on Christ’s words, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live.’ It provides consolation as well as the fundamental teaching that Christ offers eternal life.

Dives and Lazarus: Lk 16: 19 – 31

In this passage, Jesus highlights the relationship between the way we live our life and the implications it has after death. The passage also teaches us that our identity remains after death.



Prayer – To reiterate the point that those who have died are not separated from us, it is important to pray for them. Encourage times during family prayer to pray for loved ones who have died. It provides consolation yet reminds us that they, with us, form the one Church. At this stage you can also teach your child the prayer for the dead: *Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord. And let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace.*

Mind



Task - The Last Things – At this later stage of development, you can introduce your child to the teachings on the Last Judgement. Discuss the nature of our eternal destiny, with God in heaven. It is important to help your child to understand that we merit that destiny through our works on earth. We all have a personal responsibility to do good on earth, and we will give an account of those works when we come to meet God.

At this stage, children may have already taken up the challenge on engaging with social justice initiatives in response to their Confirmation. If your child has taken steps to do charitable works, you can point out how this is an example of the responsibility we bear for others. This may also be a good opportunity for your child to explore ways they can be of service to others.



Scripture – The same scriptural passages can continue to be read. Yet, at this stage they will be read through a different lens. Your child will be prompted to think about the lives of the rich man and Lazarus. They can begin to reflect on how they might live their life, and what the characters in the story can teach us about how we ought to live.

The Rich Ruler: Lk 18: 18 – 30

This passage highlights the similar theme, that what we do on earth has implications after death.

Prayer – Encourage your child to continue to the practise of praying for the dead. As your child develops in their understanding of the Last Judgment, it is important to encourage them to cultivate the virtue of hope. Hope offers comfort in difficulties and encourages us in our plight towards heaven. At this stage you can encourage your child, in their prayers, to make an act of hope. One example is:

O my God, relying on your infinite mercy and promises, I hope to obtain pardon of my sins, the help of your grace, and life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer.

Amen.

Key principles addressed in Teachable Moment 7:

1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 6.2.

Teachable Moment 8

Feast Days

The Christian family will strive to celebrate at home, and in a way suited to the members, the times and feasts of the liturgical year.

Familiaris Consortio #61

One of the treasures we possess in the Church is our relationship with the Saints. We have a trove of feast days and solemnities that honour those who have gone before us as models of virtue and fidelity to God. We believe the saints continue to work for us from their place in heaven. As the Catechism explains, ‘*Being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole Church more firmly in holiness... they do no cease to intercede with the Father for us...*’ (CCC 956). With this in mind, we are encouraged to honour our heavenly friends who lived virtuous lives and continue to intercede for us. There are many feast days honouring our saints, with so many ways that they can be memorialised in our homes.

In my own family, I became accustomed to honouring the saints when the festivities continued after Christmas day. The 26th has always been the day when my mum received phone calls (or visitors) to honour her patronal saint, Stephen. My mum is named Stephanie; thus, this day became a celebratory day for her too. The following day was the feast of St John (Ivan, in Croatian), which happens to be my brother’s name. This meant another spit roast and more celebrations for the feast of St John. Celebrating religious days in my family was always a big occasion. Culturally, it meant many families gathered and celebrated these days together. My family took these feasts so seriously that they were revered as a Sunday. This meant no work was allowed, as it was a day of rest (and celebration). To this day, these traditions continue. In fact, only yesterday (29th June) my father went to Mass and then treated himself to a day without work.

As a teacher, I looked forward to celebrating feast days with my students. With every Saint Day or Solemnity, there was always a concrete object that helped children understand the significance of that person. My favourite celebration was the Solemnity of All Saints. Children came to school dressed as their favourite saint. One little girl proudly held her breadbasket, as St Elisabeth of Hungary, and a little boy lovingly held onto his baby doll (Jesus) as he was dressed in a brown cloak as St Anthony. This day, whilst simply enjoyed as a dress-up day became the greatest teaching opportunity. Each child was able to teach us something about their saint, simply by explaining their costume and props.

Cultivating the Teachable Moment: *Purchase a liturgical calendar, which you can display in your home, or invest in a liturgical calendar phone app that you can refer to. Highlight dates that are significant in your family. Perhaps you share a birthday with a Saint or even have the same name. Choose a few throughout the year that you can celebrate as a family.*

Education in the Feast Days and Solemnities

Body



As explained in the introduction, the starting point for any new learning begins with something tactile. Thus, when it comes to celebrating feast days it will be helpful to first engage the senses. Below are activities suggested for six feast days and solemnities, which have been specifically selected as there are associated traditions that include something tactile. There are other saints and solemnities that you may like to celebrate as a family. Regardless of which feast you choose it is important to remember the principle that the most effective starting point always begins with the senses.

The Feast of Saint Anthony – June 13th

A traditional practise on the Feast of St Anthony, is to have bread blessed. Some parishes offer bread, and some encourage you to bring your own. On this feast, the bread is blessed in memorial of St Anthony. As a way of engaging your child, read a short story about the life of St Anthony and the tradition of blessing bread. You can then have your child bring some bread to Mass to be blessed on this feast day.

The Feast of Saint Blaise – February 3rd

The traditional practise for the Feast of St Blaise, is the blessing of throats. On this day, some parishes engage in the traditional practise of blessing throats with candles. Because it is a sensory experience, children enjoy watching the blessing particularly as the see candles being place beside people's throats. Again, it would be a great idea to read a short story about the life of St Blaise and why this tradition began.



The Month of Mary – The Month of May

Traditionally, the month of May is dedicated to Our Lady. If you have a prayer space in your home, it would be a great idea to include a statue or image of Our Lady. If you already have one in your prayer space, perhaps you can elevate it on a stand or adorn it with flowers to emphasize the dedication to Mary during May. Some parishes have processions or a crowning ceremony. If this is offered, it would be a great opportunity for your children to attend. Even if your parish does not have a ceremony or procession, you can simply encourage your child to bring flowers to place before a statue of Mary in the church.



Our Lady Help of Christians – May 24th

This Marian feast day is recognised as a solemnity because Our Lady, Help of Christians, is the patroness of Australia. You can read the story of how this title was attributed to Our Lady, and then attend Mass together. As previously mentioned, the gesture of bringing flowers before the statue of Mary or adorning your prayer space, would be a fitting way to engage your child in this celebration.

Ascension – 40 Days after Easter

The Ascension is celebrated forty days after Easter, commemorating Christ's ascension into Heaven. To prepare for the solemnity, you can read one of the accounts of the Ascension: **Acts 1: 1 -11, Mt 28: 16 – 20, Mk 16: 19 – 20, Lk 24: 50 – 53**. These readings will be read during Mass but reading them before or after will provide an opportunity for developing your child's understanding of the event of Christ's ascension.



In your prayer space you might like to print a picture of the Ascension. You can even teach your child this verse from scripture, which can be used for prayer in the lead up or aftermath of the Ascension. This verse is used as the Communion Antiphon for the Mass of the Ascension:

Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age, alleluia.

Pentecost - 50 Days after Easter

Pentecost marks the final day of the Easter season. It is considered a feast of the Holy Spirit, therefore your prayer cloth can be changed to red for this day. Red symbolises the fire of the Holy Spirit. As with the Ascension, it would be helpful to read the Mass readings for this feast: Acts 2: 1 -11, Jn 20: 19 – 23.

This week you can teach your child another simple verse to be used for prayer. The suggested prayer is, *Come Holy Spirit*. For the first time, you can simply pray the first line. Each year you can add another phrase.



*Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful
and kindle in them the fire of your love.*

Heart



The concrete activities may continue to remain traditions in your family. Some of the traditions, such as blessing the bread for the Feast of Saint Anthony, may be a gesture that is enjoyed every year. So, whilst your child may progress to their next developmental stage, some activities remain indispensable. However, they will still need to be challenged to a more supernatural level that ultimately appeals to their hearts.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus – 19 Days after Pentecost

The Feast of the Sacred Heart commemorates the love that Jesus has for humanity. There are devotions and prayers associated with the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as well as consecrations. Traditionally, people have consecrated themselves, their family, or a particular person to the Sacred Heart. It is an appropriate feast day to highlight as it emphasises the love of Jesus, thus also appealing to hearts of children.

Images appeal to children's hearts, therefore you can do a search of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, describing the symbols associated with it: the crown of thorns, the crucifix, and the flame of Christ's love. Encourage your child to read about this feast, or even learn the prayer: "*O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in Thee*"



Corpus Christi – 60 Days after Easter (can be moved to Sunday)

Corpus Christi is also known as the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. It honours our belief in the True Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. At the conclusion of Mass, there is often a procession of the Blessed Sacrament, which can be taken outside into the public, or simply around the church. The Blessed Sacrament is in a monstrance as it is processed outside. The procession, once completed, usually involves benediction when the Blessed Sacrament is returned to the Church. This is a wonderful celebration, which your child will enjoy, as they physically take part in the procession. You can also encourage your child to learn some of the hymns, reading them prior to Mass, so that they can participate more fully in the procession.

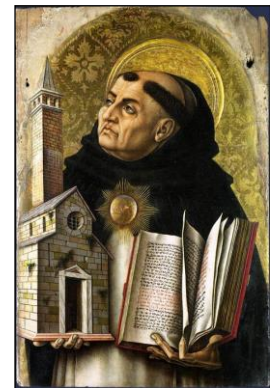


Feast of the Presentation – February 2nd

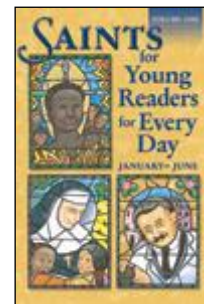
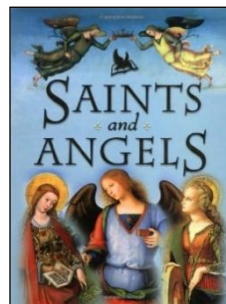
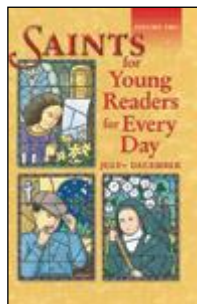
The Feast of the Presentation celebrates Jesus' presentation in the Temple 40 days after his birth. It is a significant day for it marks the moment when Jesus was recognised as the one who would save. In the Gospel reading, Simeon declares *'Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace just as your promised; because my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all the nations to see, a light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel.'* Simeon's words acknowledge Jesus as saviour as well as the light.

Because of the symbolism of light, on this day, candles are blessed. Some parishes bless and distribute candles, or you may bring your own to be blessed. Children will enjoy partaking in this ceremony and bringing home a candle from church. This can then be placed in your family prayer area.

Contemplation of Art – As suggested in each Teachable Moment, sacred art is an effective way of appealing to children's hearts. Finding images associated with saints or feasts will be useful for children to engage with and interpret, as they tend to be rich in symbolism and imagery.



Saints stories – At this stage, children will be more capable of reading independently. Provide them with simple saints' books, where they can choose to read about the saints that appeal to them.

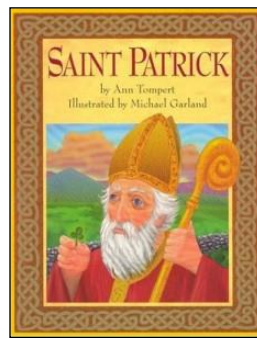
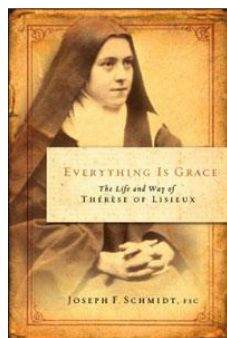


Mind



At this level, further depth of knowledge is required to engage children. It is a synthesis point where they can describe what engaged their senses and captured their heart. Children will be capable of deepening their knowledge, challenging themselves with abstract thoughts and ideas. Therefore, encourage them to select their own saints or feasts to celebrate. They might select saints that have stood out to them as exemplars of virtue, or they may be intrigued by certain feasts and solemnities.

Saints stories – At this stage, provide novels (or short stories, depending on age) so that your child can read in-depth biographies about their chosen saints. Whilst they can read independently, it is important to engage in conversations with your child about what they learnt from that saint.



Saints Peter and Paul – June 29th

You can encourage your child to read and learn about the combined feast of these two saints: Peter and Paul. Challenge them to read about why the two saints share a feast, and what their role was in establishing the Church.



Trinity Sunday – First Sunday after Pentecost

The Trinity is a challenging concept, as we try to interpret the three persons of the Trinity and how they relate to each other. At this age, children are capable of synthesising their ideas about the Trinity. To support them, show them images or symbols of the Trinity. Then encourage them to find their own. This will support them in their understanding of unity within a trinity.



Key principles addressed in Teachable Moment 8:

1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 6.2.

Teachable Moment 9

Advent

It [Advent] is a special time to educate ourselves in vigilant preparation for our encounter with Christ at Christmas, who will manifest himself fully as King and Lord in the glory of heaven.

Pope Saint John Paul II

Advent marks the beginning of the new liturgical year and initiates our preparation for Christmas. It is a dedicated time of preparation for the feast of our Lord's nativity. If we carefully follow the readings at Mass, we will also notice the messianic character of Advent, which points to the return of Jesus. As the prophets of old waited expectantly for the Messiah, we too share that same anticipation in the lead up to Christmas.

The challenge of this period leading up to Christmas is the commercialisation that is so prevalent in our culture. This can certainly pose a challenge when families are striving to educate their children in the true meaning of Christmas, namely the birth of Christ. Rather than having advent overshadowed by this cultural challenge, families can instead create a light within their homes, based on familial traditions that lend themselves to preparing for our encounter with Christ at Christmas.

When I was a child, there was one thing that always prompted me to realise we were close to Christmas: *the Christmas wheat*. A Croatian tradition is to plant a handful of wheat, usually on a small plate, that would grow as we waited for Christmas. This wheat, which my grandmother diligently planted each year, is traditionally laid on the Feast of St Lucy, 13th December. Twelve days later it is adorned with ribbons and a candle and is lit on Christmas day.



Cultivating the Teachable Moment:

*Establishing simple traditions during Advent may be a way of cultivating a teachable moment. The easiest and most effective tradition is the Advent Wreath. This simple green wreath with four candles is the ideal way of prompting a teachable moment, lighting one candles as you progress through Advent. Set up your wreath in a prominent place so that children are continually reminded of the season. If you have a prayer space or prayer table in your home, it would be a good idea to cover it with a purple cloth on the first Sunday of Advent. This colour signifies a change of season. It will immediately alert your children to the new phase they are entering during Advent, a time of **preparation**.*

Education in Advent

Body



Advent Wreath – On the First Sunday of Advent, you can set up your wreath. These can be purchased, or you can even make your own. Creating your own wreath may be a family tradition that you can start.



Wrap a circle with green garlands or foliage. This decoration of greenery reminds us of everlasting life. Place four candles (three purple, one pink) around the wreath. Each candle symbolises a week of Advent:

- On the first Sunday, one purple candle is lit
- On the second Sunday, a second candle is lit along with the first
- The third Sunday of Advent, *Gaudete Sunday*, is when the pink candle can be lit along with the first two.
- Finally, on the fourth Sunday, the fourth candle is lit.

Once your child is old enough, you may invite them to light the candles.

Advent Calendar – An Advent calendar is a concrete way for children to countdown to Christmas. Many stores sell calendars with a treat for each day. However, you can create your own calendar and adapt it in such a way that enables children to prepare more fully for Christmas. Inside the days you can place a treat and include a message from scripture related to Christ's coming, such as: *Behold, the Lord will come, Come, Lord Jesus, Be born in our hearts, Prepare a way for the Lord.*



Advent Prophecies – Introducing your child to some of the prophecies that foretold the birth of Christ would be a great idea during Advent. These prophecies can be printed out and placed in your Advent calendar. Once you take them out, you can ask questions such as, ‘I wonder who this might be about?’ These prophecies can be placed on your prayer table as a prayer prompt for the week.

Prophecy of the Young Woman: *Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. (Is 7: 14)*

Prophecy of the Town: *But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel. (Mic 5:2)*

Prophecy of the Star and Sceptre: *A star shall come out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel. (Num 24:17)*

Infancy Narratives – Together with your child you can read the narratives that are associated with the Nativity of Christ. The stories may include: The Annunciation, The Visitation, The Birth of Jesus, The Angels and Shepherds in the Fields, The Visit of the Magi, The Flight into Egypt, and The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple. If possible, it would be a great idea to create a small nativity scene in your home. These can be purchased or even crafted at home. With these nativity scenes children will be able to see these infancy narratives in a more concrete way.



Heart



Advent Wreath – As suggested in the previous stage, it is a great idea to have a wreath for Advent. As you progress into this stage, they might enjoy reading the Gospel of each Sunday of Advent. As you light the candle each Sunday your child can read the Gospel of the day and contemplate the meaning of each candle, reflecting on waiting for the coming of Christ.



Advent Calendar – In the concrete stage, the Advent calendar was introduced as a countdown to Christmas with objects inside each day. At this stage, children require tasks that appeal to their hearts. Therefore, in your Advent calendar, you can incorporate scripture quotes or images that your child can reflect upon each day of Advent. They can simply be flipped around on cards (image 1) or glued onto tags (image 2). Refer to Appendix 9 with an example of scripture quotes and images that can be used on your Advent Calendar.

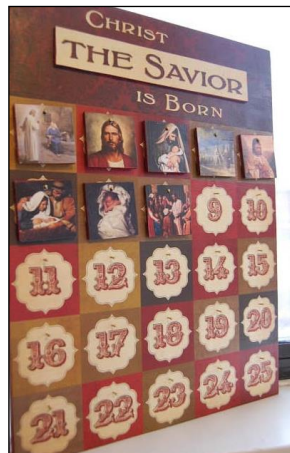


Image 1

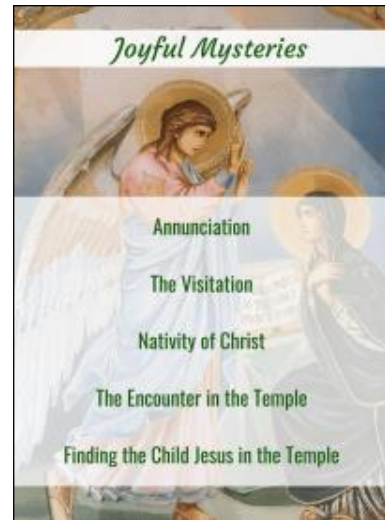


Image 2

Advent Prophecies – At this stage, your child can independently read the Advent prophecies. Once they read the infancy narratives, in the suggestion below, you can prompt them with questions about connections they have made between the prophecies and narratives.

Infancy Narratives – At this stage, your child will be able to read independently. Encourage them to read the infancy narratives, as the reading of scripture will appeal to their hearts. They need only focus on one story at a time, as this will allow them to engage more deeply with scripture as they prepare for Christmas.

Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary – Through family prayer times, you might like to pray a decade of the Rosary each night throughout Advent. To deepen your child’s understanding of the Christ’s infancy, you can focus on praying the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary together. Alternatively, your child might prefer to pray on their own, contemplating one of the Joyful mysteries of the Rosary.



Contemplation of Art – Finding religious art relating to the infancy narratives can be a great way of preparing for Christmas. Through art, children can contemplate images of Christ’s infancy, particularly those moments surrounding his birth.



Mind



Advent Prophecies – At this stage, your child can continue to read and reflect on the prophecies that foretold Christ’s birth. However, now they will be able to deepen their understanding of prophetic claims and read about the prophecies that speak of the Coming of Christ.

Children at this stage will be able to grapple with the concept of Christ’s Second Coming, which you can discuss with them. This will enable them to understand that Advent not only prepares us for Christmas, but also leads us to contemplate Christ’s Second Coming. To further support this teaching, you can also refer your child to the proclamation of the Mystery of Faith: *We proclaim your death, O Lord, and profess your resurrection, until you come again.*

Advent Calendar – If you continue to use an Advent Calendar as a preparation for Christmas, you can now incorporate activities in each day that correspond with children at this stage. As your child matures into this stage, they will become more interested in social justice and reaching out to others. Therefore, you can address this need by incorporating Acts of Service into some of the daily tasks. Refer to Appendix 9 for suggestions.



Infancy Narratives – In light of reading the narratives, creating a nativity scene would be a great Advent challenge for a child at this stage. By now, your child will be at a stage where they will enjoy a challenge of creating something for the family to enjoy. Providing them with materials for a nativity scene, or even purchasing a set of characters and allowing them to build a scene, will be an enjoyable task for children at this stage.



O Antiphons – At this stage, children develop in their prayer life as well as in their understanding of challenging topics. In the week prior to Christmas, the antiphons for Evening Prayer have a significant meaning. These antiphons are known as the ‘O Antiphons’, which refer to attributes of Christ. The initial letter of each attribute is listed as an acrostic, and when read backwards it spells **ERO CRAS** or ‘*Tomorrow I will be.*’ This can be quite an interesting task for a child at this stage. Most importantly, it provides an excellent prayer in preparation for Christmas.

Dec. 23 E Emmanuel <i>God-with-Us</i>	Dec. 22 R Rex Gentium <i>King of Nations</i>	Dec. 21 O Oriens <i>Rising Sun</i>	
Dec. 20 C Clavis David <i>Key of David</i>	Dec. 19 R Radix Jesse <i>Root of Jesse</i>	Dec. 18 A Adonai <i>Lord</i>	Dec. 17 S Sapientia <i>Wisdom</i>

To further engage your children in the ‘O Antiphons’ you can also sing the hymn ‘*O Come, O Come Emmanuel*’. This hymn is based on the antiphons and can be sung as a family for prayer each night as you prepare for Christmas.

Focus on Mary – A focus on Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is another important aspect you can encourage your child to explore during Advent. As they read through the infancy narratives, you can encourage your child to read the texts through a Marian lens, focussing on Mary’s example of obedience.



The Feast of the Immaculate Conception occurs during Advent, on December 8th. This can become another opportunity for your child to focus on the role of Mary in salvation history. On this day, you can prompt your child to read about the feast and the significance of this title bestowed upon Mary.

Key principles addressed in Teachable Moment 9:

1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 6.2.

Teachable Moment 10

Christmas

During the whole Christmas period our eyes will rejoice at the mystery of the Holy Family, just as children rejoice when they look at the crib, recognizing in it a kind of prototype of their own family, the family within which they came into the world.

Pope Saint John Paul II – Christmas Day Message, 1994 ‘Year of the Family’

The celebrations of Christmas Day, as with Easter, last beyond the day itself. The days that follow the birth of Jesus are also feast days. In fact, many celebrate the 12 Days of Christmas, which conclude on the Solemnity of the Epiphany. The Christmas season, however, concludes with the Baptism of Our Lord. There are many ways to continue the joys of Christmas day, particularly celebrating the feasts that follow.

In my own family, Christmas day continued for three days. Of course, celebrating the birth of Jesus was the first, but the two days that followed were just as celebratory. The days immediately following Christmas are the Feast of Saint Stephen and the Feast of Saint John. In my family, the two feast days were celebrated as much as Christmas day. If someone were named Stephen or John (as well as derivatives of this name, such as Stephanie or Joanna) this would become their patronal feast day, and a family feast would ensue. Although it felt like three days of feasting, it certainly kept the Christmas spirit alive.

My personal favourite Christmas tradition was, and still remains, the nativity scene. Whether small or large, crafted or bought, seeing the many nativity scenes is my favourite tradition. This was instigated by a trip to Italy, where nativity scenes were so detailed, they looked like miniature villages. The thing that struck me most about these scenes, which were everywhere from churches to shopping stores, was that they kept Christ in Christmas.

Cultivating the Teachable Moment:

There may be many familial or cultural traditions associated with Christmas in your family. Regardless of what they are, it is important to share the stories of the traditions around the dinner table at Christmas. It will be through these moments that children will have their questions, and teachable moments arise. If you have an Advent Wreath you can place a single white candle in the centre of your wreath. Explain that Jesus is the Light of the World, and this candle reminds us of that light. If you have a prayer space or prayer table in your home, the purple cloth can be replaced with white, signifying the celebratory season of Christmas. If you have established a nativity scene in your home, on Christmas day you can place the Christ-child in the manger.

Education in Christmas

Body



Advent Wreath – On Christmas day, you can add a white candle to the centre of your wreath, representative of Christ. This wreath can remain a centrepiece on your table for the day as a constant reminder that Jesus, the Light of the World, is with us.



Nativity Scene – If you have a nativity scene in your home, perhaps the youngest child can have the special job of putting the infant Jesus into the crib. It is a concrete task, as it is something that can be held in their hands, and it will be enjoyed by the youngest child.



Christmas Carols – Through singing, children will be able to joyfully celebrate the nativity whilst learning about the meaning of Christmas. It is important to select carols that reflect a religious nature as we are often saturated by many Christmas songs. Although they are celebratory, often they miss the true meaning of Christmas. Some suggestions for appropriate carols include: O Come all Ye Faithful, The First Noel, Angels We Have Heard on High, O Little Town of Bethlehem, and Hark the Herald Angels Sing. Of course, there are many other beautiful carols to sing. However, it is important that they reflect the birth of Christ.

Feast Days to Celebrate: to continue the festivities of Christmas, below are some feast days that you might like to celebrate with your children. Perhaps you can begin some of your own traditions on these days.

The Feast of Saint Stephen – 26th December

Saint Stephen was the first Christian martyr. With young children, you can simply explain that a martyr is a saint who died out of love for Jesus.

The Feast of Saint John – 27th December

Saint John is one of the four evangelists. He was also one of Jesus' disciples.

The Feast of the Holy Family – 30th December

(Or the Sunday in the Octave of Christmas)

On this day we honour the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. This can become a special feast day within your own family, where you can display an image of the Holy Family and perhaps share a meal together, creating your own family tradition.



The Solemnity of the Mother of God – January 1st

If possible, you can attend Mass on this Holy day, offering the year to Our Lady, the Mother of God. In your home, you can display an image or statue of Mary, honouring her as mother.

The Solemnity of the Epiphany – 6th January (In Australia it is observed on the nearest Sunday, between 2nd and 8th January)

On this day, we commemorate the occasion of the Magi visiting Jesus. If you have a nativity scene in your home, perhaps you can move the three kings closer to the infant Jesus. Additionally, you can sing together the Christmas carol, *We Three Kings*.

The Baptism of Our Lord - Sunday after Epiphany

On this day you can recall your child's baptism, perhaps showing them photos of the occasion. You can then explain that we are baptised just as Jesus was baptised. On this day, we celebrate Jesus' baptism.



Heart



Christmas Carols – Children may already be familiar with the Christmas carols, as mentioned in the previous section. Therefore, in this stage, you can print off the lyrics for them to read. This will enable them to focus more on their words and their meaning.

Contemplation of Art – Religious art relating to the birth of Christ is a powerful way of engaging children. There is an abundance of images illustrating Christ's birth, so perhaps you can invite your child to select some to print and display in your prayer area for Christmas. Encourage your child to read the infancy narrative in scripture, and then search for images that reflect the story. They can do this for Christmas as well as Epiphany and the Baptism of Jesus. These accounts are all in scripture, and many art works have been created to illustrate these events.



Feast Days to Celebrate: At this stage, children can continue to learn about the same feasts and solemnities as mentioned in the previous section. However, to deepen their understanding you can encourage your child to read simple saint stories that give a brief account of these particular saints.

Mind



Christmas Day Nativity Scene – If you have a nativity scene in your home, at this stage your child might have the role of reading the story of Christ’s birth from scripture. Younger children might enjoy moving the characters, whilst the eldest child reads the account. This might be a family tradition that engages all ages and stages, using scripture to guide the creation of the nativity on Christmas day.



Prophecies of Christ’s Coming – In the days following Christmas, you can encourage your child to think deeper about the prophecies that speak of the Coming of Christ. Whilst we celebrate Christ’s birth at Christmas, it is also a poignant time to contemplate that he will come again.

As in Teachable Moment 9, you can refer your child to the alternative proclamation of the Mystery of Faith: *When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.*

Feast Days to Celebrate: At this stage, you can introduce an extra feast:

The Holy Innocents - 28th December

This day honours those martyred children who were killed at the order of Herod. It is a story that may be too devastating for young children, thus proceed with caution when introducing this feast day.

The Solemnity of the Mother of God – January 1st

Although this solemnity has already been introduced, it can take a different focus for children at this later stage. As in Teachable Moment 9, you can continue the focus on Mary, the Mother of God. Encourage your child to contemplate why Mary is honoured with this title, and the significance of her being entitled *Mother of God*.






Key principles addressed in Teachable Moment 10:

1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2, 6.2.

Appendix 1: Lenten Calendar

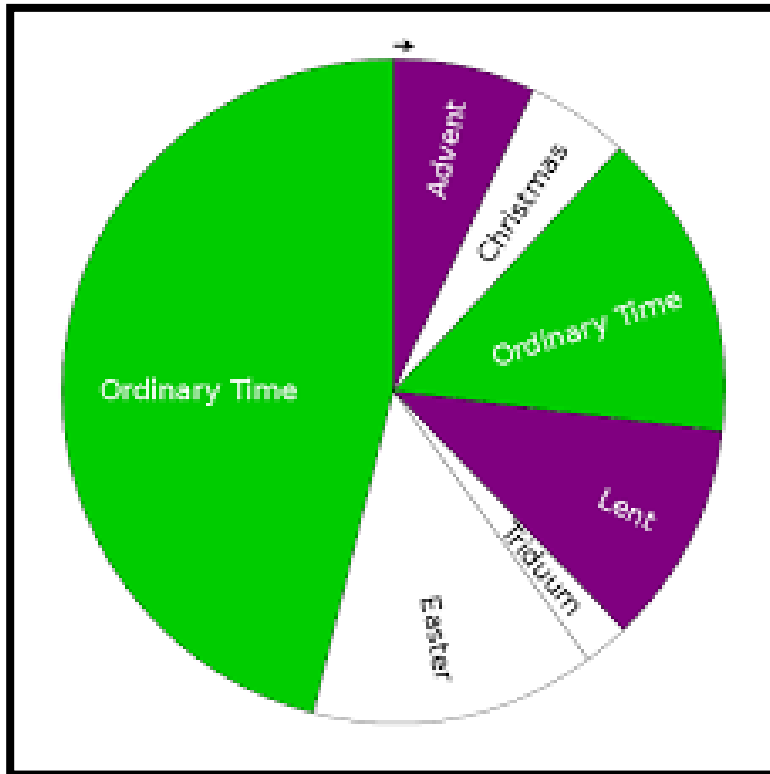


Ash Wednesday	2	3	4	1 st Sunday	5	6
						7
13	12	11	2 nd Sunday	10	9	8
14						
15	16	3 rd Sunday	17	18	19	20
						21
27	26	25	24	23	4 th Sunday Laetare Sunday	22
28						
5 th Sunday	29	30	31	32	33	34
Holy Week						Palm Sunday
HOLY SATURDAY 	GOOD FRIDAY 	HOLY THURSDAY 				
				37	36	35

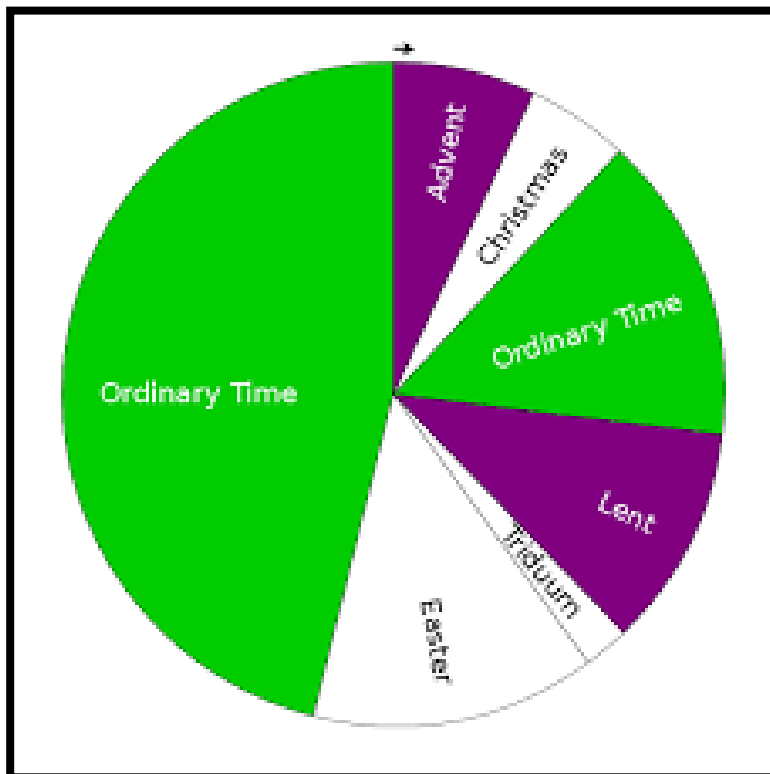
Easter Sunday!!!

Appendix 2: Liturgical Seasons (Heart)


Original
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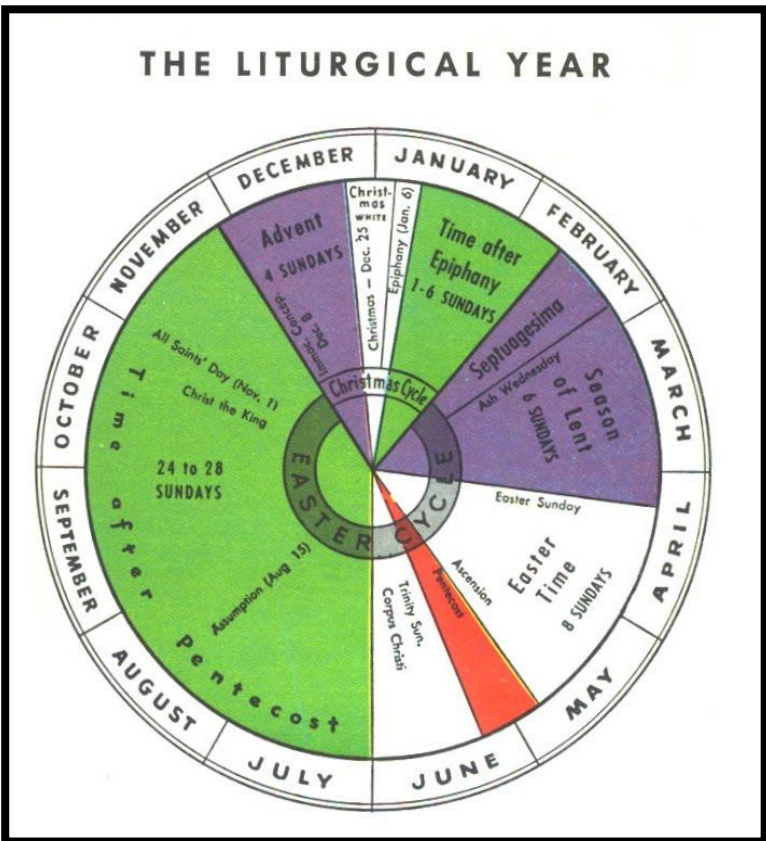



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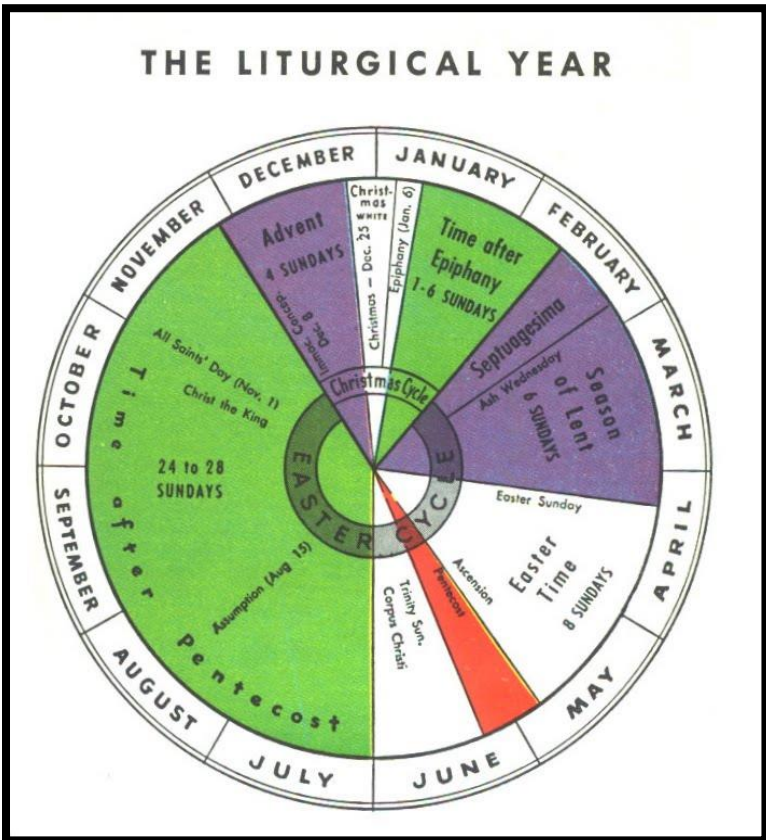


Appendix 3: Liturgical Seasons (Mind)

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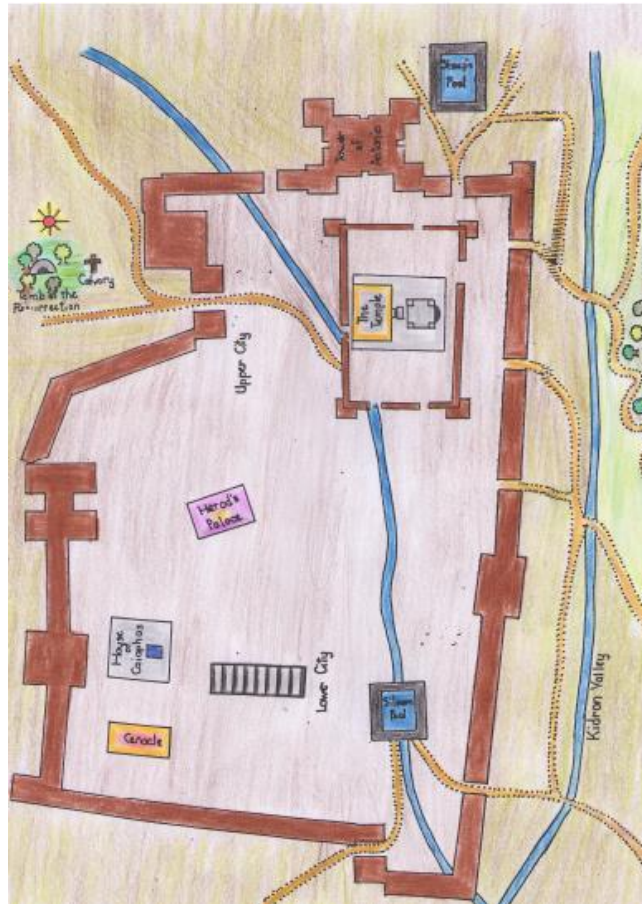


Can be cut out & put back together




Appendix 4: Map of Jerusalem

Map of Jerusalem



Included: Walls of the City

The Temple –Place of Jewish worship & sacrifices/burnt offerings were made

Cenacle – The place of the Last Supper

The Kidron Valley/Mount of Olives – The Place of the arrest

House of Caiaphas – Where Jesus was on trial before the Sanhedrin

Herod's Palace – Where Jesus was taken after the Sanhedrin trial

Tower of Antonia – Traditionally thought of as the place of Pilate's Praetorium

Pool of Bethesda (Sheep's Pool) – Where Jesus healed the paralysed man

Pool of Siloam – Where Jesus healed the blind man

Calvary – The place of the Crucifixion

The Tomb – The site of the Resurrection

Holy Week in Jerusalem

A story to accompany the model

This can be read throughout Holy week

Notice the walls around Jerusalem. This was a special city for the Jewish people and the walls surrounding Jerusalem protected it.

Palm Sunday

At the beginning of this story, Jesus entered Jerusalem on an ass and people waved their branches saying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.'

Holy Thursday

A few days later, it was a special day for Jesus and his friends. It was the Passover. They were having special prayers and a meal together. They were talking in the countryside. The friends were asking: "Where will we celebrate the Passover?" (*At this stage, you can point out the cenacle*) Here in the upper room, which we call the cenacle, is where Jesus and his friends celebrated the Passover

***Light a candle, and then read from the actual Bible: Mk 14:12 – 26

After they ate their meal, Jesus went to the Garden of Olives with His Friends. (Point out the Mount of Olives). Whilst he was praying here, he was arrested and taken away to a trial at the House of Caiaphas. (Point out the House).

Good Friday

Caiaphas sent Jesus to Pontius Pilate. Then he was sent away to be crucified. (Point out Calvary). Jesus was crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem. When he died, they took his body down from the cross and placed it in a tomb. (Extinguish the candle)

Then his friends went home. They went home to rest because they were not allowed to work on the Sabbath.

Easter Sunday

The next day they went to prepare the body... but an angel told them he was risen. (Light the candle again)

This story can be read throughout Holy week. Remember to always speak of the Death and Resurrection as one event, linked as one mystery.

Appendix 5: Jerusalem and Scripture

Scriptural References to Jerusalem

Each place in Jerusalem has several scriptural references listed below. Reading *one passage* per place will suffice. The earlier in the developmental stage, the shorter the passage needs to be. Therefore only a few verses ought to be read for a younger child. As your child develops over the years, they can add more verses as they read. Several passages have been included so that a different Gospel can be read each year.

The Temple –Place of Jewish worship & sacrificial offerings.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple: Mt 21: 12 – 17

Cenacle – The place of the Last Supper

The Last Supper: Mt 26: 17 – 30, Mk 14: 12 – 26, Lk 22: 7 – 39

The Kidron Valley/Mount of Olives – The Place of the arrest

Jesus praying in Gethsemane: Mk 14: 26, 32 -42, Lk 22: 39 – 46

House of Caiaphas – Where Jesus was on trial before the Sanhedrin

Jesus' trial: Mt 26: 57 – 68, Mk 14: 53 – 65, Jn 18: 12 – 14, 19 – 24

Herod's Palace – Where Jesus was taken after the Sanhedrin trial

Jesus before Herod: Mt 27: 11 – 26, Mk 15: 1-15, Lk 23: 6 – 12

Tower of Antonia – Traditionally thought of as the place of the Praetorium

Jesus before Pontius Pilate: Lk 23: 1 – 5, Jn 18: 28 - 38

Pool of Bethesda (Sheep's Pool) – Where Jesus healed the paralysed man

A man healed at the Pool of Bethesda: Jn 5: 1 – 15

Pool of Siloam – Where Jesus healed the blind man

A man born blind receives sight: John 9: 1 – 12

Calvary – The place of the Crucifixion

The Crucifixion: Mt 27: 32–54, Mk 15: 21–39, Lk 23: 26–49, Jn 19: 16–30

The Tomb – The site of the Resurrection

Mt 28: 1 – 10, Mk 16: 1 – 11, Lk 24: 1 – 12, Jn 20: 1 - 18

Holy Week in Jerusalem

Scripture to accompany the model

This can be read throughout Holy week, whilst locating the places on the map

Palm Sunday

Prior to entering Jerusalem, Jesus was at Bethany (Mk 14: 3-9, Mt 26: 6-13). Bethany was located to the east of Jerusalem; thus, Jesus would have entered Jerusalem from the east side, on the Mount of Olives.

Mt 21: 1 – 11, Mk 11:1-11, Lk 19:28-44, Jn 12:12-19

Holy Thursday

In the southern part of Jerusalem was the cenacle. This was the place of Jesus' Last Supper, which we celebrate on Holy Thursday. After they finished their meal, they walked out to the Garden of Olives. Whilst he was praying here, he was arrested and taken away to a trial.

The Last Supper: Mt 26: 17 – 30, Mk 14: 12 – 26, Lk 22: 7 – 39

Good Friday

After he was arrested in the Garden of Olives, Jesus was taken to the house of Caiaphas. From here, he was sent to Pontius Pilate. Then he carried his cross to Calvary, outside the walls of Jerusalem. When he died, they took his body down from the cross and placed it in a nearby tomb.

The Crucifixion: Mt 27: 32-54, Mk 15: 21-39, Lk 23: 26-49, Jn 19: 16-30

Easter Sunday

On Easter Sunday morning, the women went to anoint the body of Jesus, but he was not there. He had risen from the dead.

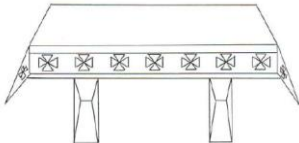
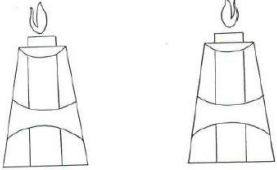
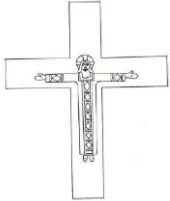

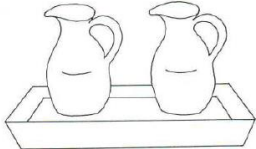
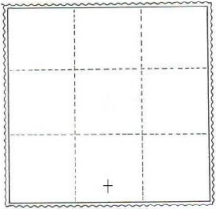
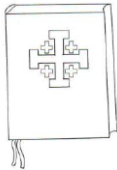

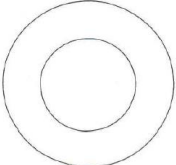
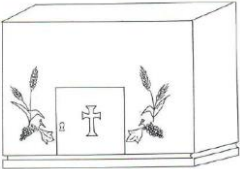


Mt 28: 1 – 10, Mk 16: 1 – 11, Lk 24: 1 – 12, Jn 20: 1 - 18

Your child can trace the steps of Jesus throughout Holy week. As they locate the place, they can also read a short passage about it in the Bible. It still remains important to speak of the Death and Resurrection as one event, linked as one mystery.


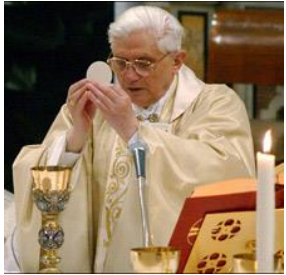




Appendix 6: Vessels, Vestments and Gestures of the Mass

Vessels, Furniture & Gestures






Below is a list of vessels and furniture that is seen in a church and used for the celebration of Mass. You can simply point to the pictures and name the objects. Once your child can read, cut out the names and pictures so that your child can match them together. On the following page, you will find a table of liturgical gestures. You can repeat the same activity with that list.





<p>Altar & Altar Cloth</p>		<p>Candles</p>	
<p>Crucifix</p>		<p>Chalice</p>	
<p>Cruets</p>		<p>Corporal</p>	
<p>Lectionary</p>		<p>Lectern</p>	
<p>Paten</p>		<p>Tabernacle</p>	
<p>Ciborium</p>		<p>Sanctuary Lamp</p>	




Liturgical Gestures

<p>Preparing the Chalice with water and wine</p>		<p>Consecration</p>	
<p>Epiclesis</p>		<p>Offering (Doxology)</p>	
<p>The Sign of Peace</p>		<p>Washing of hands (Lavabo)</p>	

Liturgical Vessels – With Explanations

<p>Altar & Altar Cloth</p>		<p>This is the special table that the priest uses to offer the sacrifice of the Mass.</p>
<p>Crucifix</p>		<p>The crucifix is placed on the altar so that the priest can face Jesus when he offers the sacrifice.</p>
<p>Cruets</p>		<p>These small glass jars contain water and wine, which will be poured into the chalice.</p>
<p>Ciborium</p>		<p>This is a precious vessel. We keep hosts inside, which are Jesus. It is kept safe in the tabernacle.</p>
<p>Candles</p>		<p>Candles are lit and placed on the altar to remind us that Jesus, the Light of the World, is with us.</p>

<p>Corporal</p>		<p>This square shaped cloth is placed on top of the altar. It catches any crumbs that may fall from the host.</p>
<p>Chalice</p>		<p>This is the special cup that the priest uses to pour water and wine into, which becomes the Blood of Christ.</p>
<p>Paten</p>		<p>This is the special plate, which holds the host. This bread becomes the Body of Christ.</p>
<p>Lectionary</p>		<p>This book has readings from the Bible. These are read during Mass.</p>

<p>Lectern</p>		<p>This is a stand where the lectionary is placed.</p>
<p>Tabernacle</p>		<p>This is a holy place. It is so special that it has a key to lock it. There is a special vessel inside called a ciborium, which holds all the hosts that are Jesus.</p>
<p>Sanctuary Lamp</p>		<p>This is a lamp that is beside or above the tabernacle. When it is lit, it tells us that Jesus is here.</p>

Liturgical Gestures – With Explanations

<p>Preparing the Chalice with water and wine</p>		<p>As the priest prepares the chalice, he pours wine and a small drop of water as he says: <i>By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.</i></p>
<p>Epiclesis</p>		<p>This priest calls down the Holy Spirit onto the gifts saying: <i>Make holy, therefore, these gifts we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.</i></p>
<p>Washing of hands (Lavabo)</p>		<p>As he prepares to offer the sacrifice, the priest washes his hands saying: <i>Wash me, O Lord from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.</i></p>
<p>Consecration</p>		<p>The priest consecrates the bread and wine, which become the Body and Blood of Christ. He says: <i>Take this, all of you and eat of it, for this is my body, which will be given up for you.</i></p>
<p>The Sign of Peace</p>		<p>The priest invites us to offer each other the sign of peace. We say to one another: <i>Peace be with you</i></p>
<p>Offering (Doxology)</p>		<p>The priest takes the chalice and the host. He raises both and says: <i>Through him, and with him, and in him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is yours, for ever and ever.</i> We respond: Amen</p>

Appendix 7: Baptism Task Cards

Baptism Symbols and their Meaning






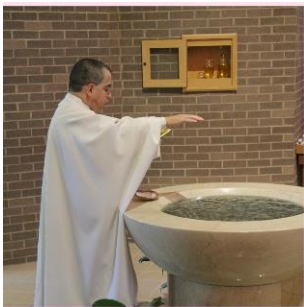

Below is a chart of symbols, as well as their explanations, used in the Rite of Baptism. Once your child can read and has already learned the various names of objects and symbols of baptism, you can challenge them with these tasks:





- Cut out the names of the symbols, pictures, and captions.
- They can match these to learn the meaning of the parts of baptism.
- Then you can challenge your child with ordering the stages of the sacrament from beginning to end.

These cards are ordered in the way the Rite of Baptism is administered. Included here is a simple summary of the nine parts in their correct order.

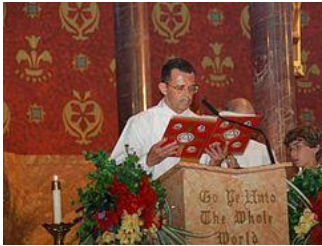




The Rite of Baptism




1. The Sign of the Cross
2. First Anointing: Oil of Catechumens
3. Listening to the Word of God
4. Invoking Holy Spirit upon the water
5. Administering the Sacrament
6. Clothing in the White Garment
7. Second Anointing: Oil of Chrism
8. Receiving the Light of Christ
9. Blessing the Parents

Symbols	Image	Explanation
Small cross		<p>This is a symbol of Christ's resurrection. A small cross is traced on the child's forehead.</p>
Oil of Catechumens		<p>This is the first anointing. The priest anoints the child's chest with this oil as he says,</p> <p><i>I anoint you with the oil of salvation in the name of Christ our Saviour, who lives and reigns forever and ever.</i></p>
Reading from Scripture		<p>We listen to the Word of God as we prepare for this sacrament.</p>
Invoking the Holy Spirit or Imposition of the hand		<p>The priest stretches his hand over the water, asking the Holy Spirit to bless it for baptism. He says,</p> <p><i>We ask you, Lord, to send your Holy Spirit upon this water.</i></p>
Administering the Sacrament Or Pouring of the Water		<p>The priest pours water on the child's head three times as he says,</p> <p><i>I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.</i></p>

<p>Clothing in White Garment</p>		<p>The priest puts a white garment on the child and says, <i>You are now a new creation and have been clothed in Christ. Receive this white garment as the outward sign of your Christian dignity. Helped by the word and example of those around you, bring that dignity unstained into eternal life. Amen.</i></p>
<p>Oil of Chrism</p>		<p>This is the second anointing. The priest anoints the forehead with chrism. This signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit.</p>
<p>Receiving the Light of Christ</p>		<p>The child's baptismal candle is lit from the Paschal candle. The priest says, <i>Receive the light of Christ.</i></p>
<p>Blessing the Parents</p>		<p>The priest blesses the parents of the child who has just been baptised.</p>

Parts of the Mass – With Explanations

<p>The Liturgy of the Word</p>		<p>In the Liturgy of the Word, we listen to Word of God from the Scriptures.</p>
<p>Preparation of the Gifts</p>		<p>Gifts of bread and wine are brought to the altar. The priest prepares these gifts which will become the Body of Christ.</p>
<p>Preparing the Chalice with water and wine</p>		<p>As the priest prepares the chalice, he pours wine and a small drop of water as he says: <i>By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.</i></p>
<p>Washing of hands (Lavabo)</p>		<p>As he prepares to offer the sacrifice, the priest washes his hands saying: <i>Wash me, O Lord from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.</i></p>
<p>Epiclesis</p>		<p>This priest calls down the Holy Spirit onto the gifts saying: <i>Make holy, therefore, these gifts we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.</i></p>

<p>Consecration</p>		<p>The priest repeats the words that Jesus said at the Last Supper, the words that express Jesus' gift of Himself. The bread and wine now become the Body and Blood of Christ. The priest says:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Do this in memory of me.</i></p>
<p>The Mystery of Faith</p>		<p>The priest proclaims, 'The Mystery of Faith.' To this gift, of Christ's himself, we respond:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>We proclaim your death, O Lord, and profess your resurrection, until you come again.</i></p>
<p>Offering (Doxology)</p>		<p>The priest takes the chalice and the host. He raises both and says:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Through him, and with him, and in him, O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is yours, for ever and ever.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">We respond: Amen</p>
<p>The Sign of Peace</p>		<p>We show our unity as we offer each other the sign of peace. We say:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Peace be with you</i></p>
<p>Reception of Holy Communion</p>		<p>We come forward to receive Jesus in Holy Communion. The priest says, 'The Body of Christ' and we reply:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Amen</i></p>

Sequencing the Mass

Once your child has become familiar with the different parts of the Mass, you can challenge them with these tasks:

- Cut out the names of the symbols, pictures, and captions.
- They can match these parts
- Then you can challenge your child with ordering the parts of the Mass.

Below is a list that can be used as a reference for this sequencing activity

The Parts of The Mass

1. The Liturgy of the Word
2. Preparation of the Gifts
3. Preparing the Chalice with water and wine
4. Washing of hands (Lavabo)
5. Epiclesis
6. Consecration
7. The Mystery of Faith
8. Offering (Doxology)
9. Sign of Peace
10. Reception of Holy Communion

Appendix 9: Advent Calendars

Heart



Advent Calendar

Below are 24 suggestions that you can use to create your own Advent Calendar. You will note that some are simply artworks whereas others are quotes from scripture. Each will appeal to a child in this developmental stage. Some days you might also like to include a surprise sweet treat, or you may prefer to use this calendar solely for a prayerful purpose.

You can simply cut out these cards or use them as a springboard for your own ideas!

<p><i>Behold the handmaid of the Lord</i></p>		<p><i>Come, Lord Jesus</i></p>	
	<p><i>Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel</i></p>		<p><i>But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel</i></p>
<p><i>Come and be born in my heart</i></p>		<p><i>Emmanuel, God with us</i></p>	
	<p><i>King of my heart</i></p>		<p><i>My soul rejoices in my God</i></p>
<p><i>Prepare a way for the Lord</i></p>		<p><i>Rejoice in the Lord always</i></p>	
	<p><i>Christ our king is coming, he is the Lamb foretold by John</i></p>		<p><i>O come let us adore him</i></p>



Advent Calendar

Below are 24 more suggestions that you can use to create an Advent Calendar, which incorporates acts of service. These can be combined with some of the images and quotes above, or you can choose to make each day an act of service.

You can simply cut out these cards or use them as a springboard for your own ideas!

<i>Pray for a family member today</i>	<i>Buy some groceries to donate to a local charity</i>	<i>Write a Christmas card for a family member</i>	<i>Clean the dinner dishes tonight</i>
<i>Help your parents make dinner tonight</i>	<i>Donate toys to your favourite charity</i>	<i>Do a job around the house without being asked</i>	<i>Make a list of people who have shown you kindness this year. Write them a Christmas card</i>
<i>Write a thank-you letter to someone you are grateful for and tell them why you are grateful</i>	<i>Spend an extra 10 minutes in prayer</i>	<i>Call a grandparent, or someone you have not spoken to in a while, to simply say hello</i>	<i>Learn the prayer: Alma Redemptoris Mater (Loving mother of our Saviour)</i>
<i>Ask your parents for an extra chore today</i>	<i>Give a compliment to someone today</i>	<i>Spend 10 minutes reading from Scripture</i>	<i>Set the table for dinner</i>
<i>Read the story of Christ's birth – perhaps you can read to a younger sibling</i>	<i>Bake some cookies to give to someone as a gift</i>	<i>Pray the Angelus today – if you already pray it daily, then try to pray it twice today</i>	<i>Leave a loving note for a family member today</i>
<i>Make a cup of tea for someone in your home today</i>	<i>Read about the 'O Antiphons'</i>	<i>Take out the rubbish, and perhaps spend a few extra minutes cleaning</i>	<i>Make a list of 5 people you are grateful for – share that list with God and pray for them</i>

