

Encourage other parents to catechize at home

ENCOURAGE

FAMILY CATECHISTS are mothers and fathers who hand on "the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3) at home. They are "the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith." (*Rite of Baptism*).

Note that **ECH** in catechist. It is like catechism, catechizing, catechetics, whereby young disciples **ECHO** the faith of the Church through the teaching of the catechist:

Faith comes by hearing
and hearing by the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17)

Vatican II's *Declaration on Christian Education* nn. 1-4 insists that parents are the first educators of their children; first not only chronologically, but "primarily", as in an even weightier document:

The duty of education,
especially religious education,
devolves primarily on parents.

Gaudium et spes, Church in the Modern World n. 49

Fathers & mothers procreate by their natural powers and educate by their inherited or acquired talents. Catholic parents are graced by Baptism, Confirmation, Matrimony, confession and Holy Communion. They are equipped to give sufficient instruction, education and formation in the **7 Rs**:

- Religion, hence praying and living in covenant with God
- Respect = courtesy and good manners
- Reason = developing the innate sense of logic and justice
- Responsibility for their duties to God and neighbour
- Reading
- 'Riting
- 'Rithmetic

The last three are the traditional "3 Rs" of a primary schooling that equipped a boy or girl to educate himself thereafter.

As well as knowledge, we cultivate "the sense of the sacred", the Holy Fear, as foundational for faith, hope and charity:

The only purpose of our instruction is that there should be love, coming from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith. (1 Timothy 1:5)

Never equate education with schools. The authority of parents as first educators does not cease if parents decide to sub-contract part of their educational duty to schoolteachers who are thereby employees of the parents. Besides, there is always the alternative of homeschooling.

Modern socialist democracies centralize authority and govern by bureaucratic decree. More and more we are imprisoned in a fur-lined mousetrap of the "the nanny State" with a Big Stick wielded by "Big Brother" (cf. "1984").

Socialism mostly ignores subsidiarity, that the higher authority should help the lower authority to function and never usurp it except as a last resort (see Handouts nn. 33, 69, 99).

ABSOLUTE URGENCY

Family catechetics by Catholic parents was always essential, but now more than ever: the home is first:

We must acknowledge the supreme obligation of each Pastor, and of every parent, to have the catechism lessons taught to their respective children in the family, in the Church and in the school. Archbishop of Sydney, 1939.

Catholic families can no longer depend on parishes and schools to fully uphold the faith. In doubt and dispute, consult the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as a measuring stick:

Do not believe every spirit,
but test the spirits to see whether they are from God;
for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1 John 4:1)

Ways and Means...

FAMILY CATECHISMS

Family catechisms are books specially designed to help teach religion at home by which mind & memory are activated with carefully crafted Questions & Answers:

Parents should be provided with catechisms written for families. *Rite of Baptism for Children* (1971 pp. 10-11).

A suitable catechism for families... clear, brief and easily assimilated by all. (*Christian Family* (1981) n 39)

For an explanation and defence of Q&A catechisms, see *A Catechism About Catechisms* (Handouts n. 1).

CATHOLIC FAMILY CATECHISM 1981-2016

Its *Disciples' Edition* 2004/2009 suits all ages. Pre-schoolers like its simple pictures, and older children its texts. It can help equip youths and adult converts to know and live the lay apostolate.

Its *Disciples' Edition II* has the updated Apostles' Creed (as in the new Mass texts), and should be used in the Rosary.

OTHER TEXTS and OTHER PARENTS

Parents who are familiar with the many wonderful children's texts and teachers' books designed for schools can show other parents how to adapt them for home use, especially for their pictures and often for the structured order of their lessons. They know much informally from their own upbringing or more formally from experience and instruction.

The Church in Australian urgently needs full scale family catechetics for religious formation at home is vital for salvation and the future apostolate.

It is much more than religious instruction. It is learning the faith by living it. This is primarily a parental duty, whether or not the parents choose to home-school, or to have a Catholic school, other Christian school or government school to help them with some aspects of education and formation.

CULTIVATING THE SEVEN SENSES for parents, priests and other teachers

1. Sense of Faith;
2. Sense of the Sacred;
3. Sense of Humour;
4. Sense of Compassion;
5. Sense of History;
6. Sense of the Apostolate;
7. Sense of Urgency, above all, prayer as soul of the apostolate.

PRIESTS ACTIVATE THE LAY APOSTOLATE

In the Church there is diversity of ministry but unity of mission. To the Apostles and their successors Christ has entrusted the office of *teaching, sanctifying and governing* in His name and by His power. But the laity are made to share in the *priestly, prophetic and kingly* office of Christ; they have therefore in the Church and in the world their own assignment in the mission of the whole People of God.

VCII, *Apostolate of the Laity* n. 2

What is most needed at the present time is to have in each parish a group of laity who are at the same time **virtuous, enlightened, determined and really apostolic.**

St Pius X to a group of cardinals, about 1905.

SEE, JUDGE, ACT

"Look before you leap, think before you act, and pray first of all"

GETTING THEM STARTED

Invoke a few mothers, and fathers too, if possible, to La morning/afternoon tea or supper and enthuse them with their mission, viewed with a Godly vision:

Without a vision, the people perish. Proverbs 29:18

SEE

"See" means find out where they're up to and what they and their children have learnt by heart — not just by mind but with faith, love and understanding.

Be careful not to embarrass by inquisitive questioning. Be informal and be sensitive. When evaluating the children, perhaps make a game of it?

Check them on St John Paul II's memorization list (see back cover *Catholic Family Catechism Disciples' Edition*):

1. Words of Jesus; e.g. Our Father, Sign of the Cross.
2. other Bible texts; e.g. "God so loved the world..."
3. the Creed(s) which are summaries of the entire Bible;
4. the Ten Commandments (brief form also full Bible texts);
5. the Liturgical texts: e.g. "In confess to Almighty God";
6. other prayers; e.g. "Hail, Mary";
7. key doctrinal ideas; e.g. the 50 Q&As in CFCDE; and the Pope adds "etc": which includes doctrinal hymns.

JUDGE

Judge what is to be done to deepen FAITH, PIETY (devotion), COMPETENCE and CONFIDENCE in mothers and fathers as catechists:

There are always three aspects, whether for tutoring parents or teaching children: **instruction, devotion and "living"**:

Choose an **apt place**, time of day, duration (not too long). Children may need "minders" (but never electronic baby-sitters and plug-in drugs!), e.g. older siblings or grandma.

Choose a **starting-up plan**. Later, evaluate it: there are many ways of achieving our purpose.

ACT

Informal instruction in car and kitchen by quizzes, Bible games, repetition, chanting, singing (even if its only "making a cheerful noise unto the Lord"), etc.

Formal instruction in lounge room or big kitchen. Short sessions of 15 minutes okay for infants and primary, longer for secondary and tertiary.

Creed, Sacraments, Covenant (commandments) & **Prayer** are the **CONTENT**, but not necessarily in that logical order. Prayer is first, others can move around. Keep a record (perhaps on a wall calendar) to ensure integrity of content over a year and to unify the sessions if they are in snippets.

Repetition and revision are essential: teach the same thing over and over again but with a fresh approach each time. Make a game of it.

Fathers should be involved as far as possible.

Sequence of instructions might depend on family members receiving sacraments: Baptism, Confession, Communion, Confirmation, Matrimony. Ask those who've taught it and about their texts and methods.

IDEAS for tutoring the parents and for parents tutoring their children

Serious instruction always involves **written work**. There is no impression without expression. At the very least, write out Bible texts and catechism definitions (and always set out in sense-lines): it puts the mental muscles of mind and memory to work.

Like a child growing, various phases tend to merge:

- **Evangelization** for non-Christians, lapsed Christians;
- **Catechetics** (=catechesis) for the baptized to progress;
- **Apologetics** for youth, unbelievers and the lapsed;
- **Teaching how to teach** for parents and older siblings.

We learn by listening so we must learn to listen which means importance of **silence** — rearrange the letters of LISTEN to make SILENT.

Use **teaching aids** and also make your own. Don't dim the sense of the sacred with "power presentations" (cf. the "still small voice" of God to Elijah on Mt Horeb) because it can all too easily become an end in itself. Don't aim to dazzle, titivate or entertain, but to interest, convince and inculcate faith, hope & charity.

For instance, make a model altar from the cardboard shoe box and let the children to add the furnishings.

SPIRITUALITY

Problems in being a faithful Catholic are:

- ignorance, hence give & receive catechetical instruction;
- sinful compromises, hence regular confession;
- lack of genuine generous love, hence no contraception;
- lacking friendship with our Saviour Jesus Christ: we must grow in prayer, Bible reading, liturgy and the virtues.

Phone me for encouragement and advice: 02 4829 0297.

Father James Tierney

O LORD JESUS CHRIST,

Holy Child of Nazareth,
bless Thy Church in our homes
and our handing on the faith
through the *Catholic Family Catechism*.

By the prayers and example
of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Joseph
keep us faithful in our calling
as parents, priests and other teachers,
youthful disciples, catechists or missionaries,
for Thine is the Kingdom,
the Power and the Glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

MARY most holy, living catechism. Pray for us.

MOTHER and Model of catechists. Pray for us.

QUEEN of Apostles. Pray for us.

MAY the Lord be in our hearts and on our lips,
that we may worthily and fitly
proclaim His Gospel, in the Name of the Father
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.