

What's to be done? The answer is **Family Catechetics** to make practising Catholics!

Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years. This already happens when family members help one another to grow in faith by the witness of a Christian life in keeping with the Gospel. **Family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches** other forms of instruction in the faith. Parents have the mission of **teaching their children to pray** and to **discover their vocation** as children of God. The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents. CCC n. 2226

Long ago, on 11<sup>th</sup> August, 1939, just two years after our last Plenary Council in 1937, Sydney's Archbishop Michael Kelly mandated the *Old Green Catechism*, saying:-

...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**.

That family catechetics comes first, before parish instruction and Catholic Schools, is now in Canon Law:-

Before all others, parents are bound to form their children, by word and example, in faith and in christian living. The same obligation binds godparents and those who take the place of parents (CCL c. 774 §2).

Family Catechetics is not optional. It's essential. Also note the priest's role:-

By virtue of his office, the parish priest is bound to ensure the catechetical formation of adults, young people and children.... The parish priest is also to promote and to foster the role of parents in the family catechesis mentioned in can. 774 §2. (CCL c. 776)

Conduct pilot projects: Invite parents, priests and others teachers to **volunteer** to try out the *Catholic Family Catechism* in homes, parishes and schools — a mission for volunteers, not conscripts. CATECHISMS of Q&A fulfil St John Paul II's prescription: "**a suitable catechism for families**", "**clear, brief and easily assimilated by all**". *The Christian Family in the Modern World (Familiaris Consortio) §39.*

**Family Prayers** are essential, plus parental guidance for bedside private prayers as well.

**SYSTEMATIC** and/or **INFORMAL** teaching all suit Family Catechetics, but keep in mind:-

- Opt for "**both systematic and informal**" rather than "either/or".
- **Planned home-lessons** are sometimes needed, though casual instruction is much better than none at all.
- **Tutor one-to-one** or in groups, as seems best; older siblings can share in this catechetical work.
- **Sacred ceremonies/objects** used in church or home suit explanation/discussion.
- **Sermons** are often a foundation for discussion with older children.
- **Sing doctrinal hymns** in lounge, kitchen, car etc; **learn a hymn each week**, or at least, one verse.
- **Learn/recite/chant** an OT/NT Bible text weekly; check **Creeds/Sacraments/Commandments/Prayers**.
- **Write** — hand and eye reinforce the ear; use **dictation, copying, creative composing**, etc.
- **Pictures**, specially for youngsters, at home, in church; also **draw your own pictures**, also diagrams.
- **Church history**, beginning with Bible History; **lives of saints and biographies** of the faithful.
- **Home library** (and suggest to the priest a parish have a library of DVDs, CDs, books, articles).
- **Gather monthly** with other families to get ideas, inspiration, encouragement, what to avoid.
- **Invite a priest** to talk to parents while others give a catechetics class to children in age groups.

Invite homeschoolers, catechists and Catholic school teachers to get children **memorizing Questions & Answers**. Try it out! And back it up by urging parents to have **family prayers**, at least before meals, and to **come to Mass**, for which children can be apostles to their parents.

**Persuade the lapsed to pray** so God can prompt them to long to come closer to Him at Mass.

We can declare the Apostles' Creed (pp. 39-40) our **Vision Statement**. It summarizes the whole Bible, it presents the principal mysteries of the Unity and Trinity of God, the Incarnation, Death and Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the sending of the Holy Spirit, the mission of the Church, and it relates these to the ultimate end of man for all eternity. Our **Mission Statement** is Christ's clarion call to "**Repent and Believe in the Gospel**" (Mark 1:15), issued to each of us and to all mankind..

We need to cultivate those Seven Senses (p. 2) for spiritual sensitivity to hear and heed God, and to empathize with His people:-

A sense of **faith**  
and a sense of the **sacred**,  
a sense of **compassion**  
and a sense of **humour**,  
a sense of **history**  
and a sense of **wonder**,  
a sense of the **urgency** of the apostolate.

A friend said that I had left out "a sense of the absurd" to which I replied, "The absurd is the chief constituent in a sense of humour" — so maybe even God

## Catholic Homeschooling — an alternative to “Schooling in Schools”

Catholic HOMESCHOOLING is often adopted after Family Catechetics has proved a success. Even call it HOME TUTORING, to emphasize the one-to-one teaching of tutor to pupil, parent to child. In Victoria, HOME-EDUCATING is a preferred name for homeschooling, to indicate its totality.

By any name, it really produces Catholic lay apostles for our pagan society.

It is a complete education for a good and Godly upbringing in Christian discipling and lay apostolate, and to be more genuinely human, in that it cultivates the 7 'Rs, not just the 3 'Rs:-

1. RELIGION brings us to God and God to us, and so fulfils our created dignity, duty & destiny;
2. RESPECT for self & others, i.e. manners and self-control, helps us live with ourselves and to be easy to live with;
3. REASON, memory and understanding, are from the image of God in us;
4. RESPONSIBILITY for our thoughts, words and deeds: discernment to choose the good and reject evil;
5. READING, especially “living books”, helps us share in the knowledge and goodwill of suitable authors;
6. 'RITING, by which thought is expressed most succinctly, and preserved, shared and disseminated;
7. 'RITHMETIC, with fluency in figuring, add, subtract, multiply, divide; also mentally for small numbers.

N.B. nn. 5,6,7 are life-skills of mind and body. Yet the absence of nn. 1,2,3,4 reduces the efficacy of classroom teaching of the 3 'R's to an endless, painful and wasteful struggle in “crowd control”.

**IS IT LEGAL? YES.**

**ARE PARENTS QUALIFIED? YES, mostly:-**

- Their own schooling/post-schooling.
- Completion of three or four years of High School plus life experience is enough to teach Primary.
- Ongoing reading/study of curriculum/content/method, and later on, taking courses/degrees:
  - cumulative experiences builds up specialized skills in tutoring ages 2-20 years;
  - successfully married & bringing up children for years;
  - unique interest in welfare of their own children in body & soul;
  - God's grace of state in the Sacrament of Matrimony;
  - proven success: pupils get employment and university entry at age 16 or 17 through “open university”.
- Professionals teachers for classes of 25-30 try to cope with disparate ability, effort, interest. However, diverse ability, interest, effort can be tutored more creatively one-to-one. Moreover, home-techniques can induce pupils to *work on their own* with texts, “living books” and internet, a better preparation for tertiary study.

**HOME-TUTORING ensures (1) the practice of the Faith and (2) better socialization.**

Centering on the family, that under-valued yet most vital resource of our civilization, home-tutoring is a richer and a different life-style of schooling. It's benefits are:-

- **Socialization** (across ages 0 to 90+) is better without the peer dependence from age-grading in schools.
- Peer friendships of home-tutored children need not weaken parental and sibling relationships.
- It forms children for inner security in an increasingly insecure world.
- No money is wasted on school fees or transport; and no time is wasted in travelling.
- **Employability** is proven in the outcomes: they pay taxes and don't go on the dole.
- Family manners and discipline predispose children for home-tutoring; their absence is a nightmare
- **Each learns at his own pace** — not achieved by a school's higher pupil-teacher ratio and more distractions.
- The home-tutored are free to work ahead of schedule and their academic success is proven.
- **School-style Homework** is unnecessary: afternoons and evenings are freer for jobs, hobbies and reading.

### **MORE ON SOCIALIZATION**

Socialization means getting on well with parents, siblings, cousins, neighbours and strangers both young and old. Big families hold out welcoming hands to smaller. Indeed, some parents have given socialization as their first reason for home-schooling. USA sociological studies show home-tutored pupils are mostly better socialized, more courteous, secure and 'open' than pupils at ordinary schools. Others again have been moved to homeschool to impart the faith and life of the Catholic Church when the official Catholic Schools failed to do so, or even worked against it with false teaching.

Champion of Christian homeschooling in the USA, psychologist Raymond Moore, found that schools do not socialize children, rather they make them 'peer dependent', i.e. subservient, enslaved. Peers at school can reduce, usurp, even negate parental influence: victims relate less well to their older and younger siblings at home.

**Yes, children do need peer friendships outside their family:** cousins, neighbours, i.e. peers without schools.

At a school, pupils easily lapse into 'human respect', i.e. thinking or speaking (even acting out) false or ignoble ideas lest they lose esteem in the eyes of peers — like a crowd lowering one's moral sensitivities. Peer pressure easily becomes psychological bullying.

Also some parent groups set up Charter-style really Catholic Schools — make enquiries, dialogue and visit.