



The Domestic Church: How important a role does a parent/guardian have in the religious instruction of our children today?

In his Apostolic Exhortation “*Familiaris Consortio*”, our beloved, late Pope John Paul II wrote that more and more, parents/guardians in the modern world have steadily grown unaware of and/or disconnected from their obligation to teach their children matters of the faith following the child’s baptism.

To better inform ourselves, the following are pertinent excerpts from *Familiaris Consortio*:

“According to the plan of God, marriage is the foundation of the wider community of the family, since the very institution of marriage and conjugal love are ordained to the procreation and education of children ... When [people] become parents, [they] receive from God the gift of a new responsibility. Their parental love is called to become for the children, the visible sign of the very love of God.

The task of giving [religious] education is rooted in the primary vocation of married couples to participate in God’s creative activity ... 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 ... and [is] therefore incapable of being entirely delegated to others ...

The mission to educate demands that Christian parents should present to their children all the topics that are necessary for the gradual maturing of their personality from a Christian ... point of view. [However, the family is] not the only and exclusive educating community. Man’s community aspect itself – both civil and ecclesial—demands and leads to a broader and more articulated activities resulting from well-ordered collaboration between the various agents of education. ... By corresponding to their right, parents have a serious duty to commit themselves totally to a cordial and active relationship with the teachers and the school authorities.”

In closing, the responsibility of educating our parish’s children in matters of the Catholic religion is indeed a collaborative effort—beginning first with the parents/guardians in the home—and supplemented with the more traditional and formal classroom model of learning about the faith. As our parish’s religious education year commences, may God bless all of our parents, guardians, and catechists as they help our children learn first-hand how to be examples of Christ.

Respectfully
Yours in Christ,

Fr. Bob