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## **Parents Catechesis: for Children, Family or for Adults?**

### **Abstract**

The Author of article provides an important information about parent catechesis from Catholic perspective. He reminds the basis of parent catechesis, beginning with the historical importance and explanations contained in the Church Documents: “Parents are the primary educators in the faith. Together with them, especially in certain cultures, all members of the family play an active part in the education of the younger members’ (*General Directory for Catechesis*255). If parents are the most important persons of the education of children in the faith, they need to be well prepared for fulfilling their mission that includes especially treating catechesis as lifelong process, the learning of Christian doctrine and methods of family catechesis, permanent formation of mothers and fathers into the fullness of Christian life. The conclusion presents main challenges and advocates an intensification of catechetical activity in our times.

### **Keywords**

parents catechesis, adulthood, Church Documents.

Throughout its history the Roman Catholic Church held different attitudes regarding the responsibility of parents and caregivers for children faith formation. In Western Europe due to the process of secularization some church school curricula and catechesis in the parishes suggest that they operate under the assumption that religious education and catechesis is first of all the domain of formal programs, because parents are not able to take the responsibility for faith formation of their children. But the same time in Central Europe, South America, Asia it is possible to observe how the Roman Catholic Church has renewed the understanding of the role of the family in passing the faith. The parents' ability to properly bring up children needs constant enrichment with knowledge, pedagogical skills and first of all, pedagogic awareness. Most contemporary parents need outside help and proper recommendations on how to bring up children to adequately fulfil their parental roles. The educational work of the parents starts this sustained process which should then be supported (but not taken over) by the school, educational institutions, and Church. Still, in the face of this duty most parents of today's generation feel incapable, or at best ill-prepared, for awaking or presenting faith to their children. In Europe only a few parents of today's children grew up in homes where rituals of piety or religious training were practiced. They had no experiences or models which they can now introduce into their own families. Most of these same young adults did not attend organized programs of parish catechesis in the church or religious education in the Catholic school during their childhood or adolescence. When these weaknesses are linked with today's various family definitions, structures, functions and complicated, busy family schedules, the Church's advice given to earlier generations simply has no appeal to present parents.

In response to the growing challenges that less parents of today's children grew up in homes where family catechesis was practiced, the Roman Catholic Church has underlined the importance of faith formation from the beginning of a humane existence till the death, putting a special emphasis on parental catechesis, because "parents are the primary educators of the children". A recent research project on the "Polish Family as a Social Institution in the Light of Empirical Research (2011–2012)" sought to present which elements in the catechetical programs or in people's own biographies are the most significant in determining whether people will develop a "mature faith" as adults. The data reveal that one of the most important predictors of whether adolescents and adults could report having a "mature faith" was whether or not, as children, they could observe their parents practicing faith, e.g. praying, being at the liturgy,

or recall conversations with the members of the family about issues of faith. A less significant but nonetheless important factor was whether the family had worked together in helping persons in need. When trying to predict whether people could report having a mature Christian faith, these biographical ingredients were more significant than the programs organized by any religious institution.

## 1. The emphasis on Parent Education/Catechesis

Many circumstances and factors have contributed to the gradual emergence of a new way of approaching parents' education and catechesis. Additionally, some parents with a specific sensitivity to their existential and religious needs have contributed to the recognition or to the emergence of a different way of approaching the catechetical reality. In the first place, mothers and fathers noticed new, challenging circumstances and the urgency of addressing these challenges.

This emphasis on parental catechesis has come about for some major reasons<sup>1</sup>:

1. The work of the developmental psychologists has provided valuable insights into how humans learn and integrate knowledge. Building on the theories of developmental psychology, the field of faith development is presently recognized as strongly linked with human development, that requires a more integral and developmental approach to adult catechesis.
2. In 20th and the 21st century more adults received further education in order to take on new professional responsibilities. Permanent education became a necessity and retraining for a second or third career illustrates that change became a major characteristic of adult life.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. J. Stala, *Familienkatechese in Polen um die Jahrhundertwende. Probleme und Herausforderungen*, Tarnów 2008, wyd. Biblos; J. Stala, *W kierunku integralnej edukacji religijnej w rodzinie. Próba refleksji nad nauczaniem Jana Pawła II w kontekście polskich uwarunkowań*, Tarnów 2010, wyd. Polihymnia; J. Stala, *Katecheza rodzinna w nauczaniu Kościoła od Soboru Watykańskiego II*, Tarnów 2009, wyd. Polihymnia; J. Stala, *Katecheza o małżeństwie i rodzinie w Polsce po Soborze Watykańskim II. Próba oceny*, Tarnów 2004, wyd. Biblos; E. Osewska, J. Stala, *W kierunku katechezy rodzinnej*, Kielce 2003, wyd. Jedność; *Nauki o rodzinie w służbie rodziny*, ed. J. Stala, Kraków 2014, wyd. UPJPII; *Rodzina. Bezcenny dar i zadanie*, eds. J. Stala, E. Osewska, Radom 2006, wyd. Polwen; *Dzisiejsze aspiracje katechezy rodzinnej. Problemy i wyzwania*, ed. J. Stala, Kielce 2005, wyd. Jedność.

3. The Roman Catholic Church especially during and after Vatican Council II encouraged a fundamental updating of the Christian faith, not only because of changes in society and culture, but due to new interpretations of rituals, sacramental life, dogmatic statements, moral issues and deep processes of *ecclesial aggiornamento*. Unfortunately, the pastoral and catechetical opportunities available for parents to nurture their faith (vocation, sacramental life, liturgical changes, Christian life style etc.) has not always matched the personal evolution of adults.
4. A very strong emphasis has been placed on the importance of parental influence in forming children. “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.”<sup>2</sup> Parents are the ones who must create and take care for their children’s human and religious growth.
5. The natural religious formation once provided by the Catholic environment supported by other settings is no longer available in the same way as before. So parents who want to fulfil their educational and catechetical role need to search for suitable help from ecclesial institutions. At the same time the Church should seek for new ways and methods of great influence in supporting mothers and fathers such as the media of communication, various parental clubs, support groups, children and youth associations, and, educational institutions.
6. The individuation: today’s adults are encouraged to take autonomy and decide for themselves in a large range of issues, so they are searching for their personal lifestyle and discovering what life is about. The free decision is also related to religion, initiation and growth of faith. Relying on the free choice, parents often postpone their children’s baptism or first communion, allowing children to decide for themselves.
7. According to the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*: “catechesis is closely linked with the responsible activity of the Church and of Christians in the world. A person who has given adherence to Jesus Christ by faith and is endeavouring to consolidate that faith by catechesis needs to live in communion with those who have taken the same

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<sup>2</sup> *Gravissimum Educationis* no 3.

step”, so adults need a Christian community to help them at a certain stage of their lives. That is why adults may expect welcoming them into an ecclesial setting and various formation training provided by local Church.

8. There is the new understanding of upbringing, socialization and relationship between generations (grandparents, parents, children). The simultaneity of new life experiences among the different generations disturbs the complementarity connected to the traditional educational setting. In reality, a new paradigm emerges; according to the basic dynamic process, wherever is possible grandparents present the foundations of faith however the lacunae left by grandparents is filled by media or peers whose approach to religion can be very negative.

These phenomena: the influence of developmental psychology, the research on the influence of parents on children, Vatican Council aggiornamento, permanent educations of adults and the life of Catholics in heterogeneous communities, make permanent, systemic and adult-oriented catechesis a very urgent task. Therefore some parishes report the presence of adult-centered movements, including prayer groups, scripture study, voluntary clubs, encounter experiences, ministries to families, the widowed, singles, and people living alternative lifestyles, or programs such as RCIA, the Neocatechumenate and the Charismatic movement.

## 2. Church and State Documents

In order to improve enrichment of the parents’ pedagogical consciousness in the field of their children and their own religious education it is important to recall a few documents underlining the role of parents in the process of upbringing. In the Declaration of Child Rights adopted by the UN on 20 November 1959 it is emphasized that a child “should grow under the protection and responsibility of the parents” (rule 6). In the process of educating and upbringing – the Declaration points – all “people responsible for the upbringing and the management of the child should bear in mind his welfare; this responsibility lies mainly on the parents.”<sup>3</sup> So, in the light of the resolutions of the UN General Assembly, the primary right to bring up children belongs to the parents.

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<sup>3</sup> *The UN General Assembly, The Declaration of Child Rights, in: ditto, pp. 244–247.*

The Second Vatican Council, especially in its *Declaration on Christian Education* also affirmed that “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”<sup>4</sup> and “the parents who have the primary and inalienable right and duty to educate their children must enjoy true liberty in their choice of schools.”<sup>5</sup> In the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, it is possible to read: “by their very nature the institution of matrimony itself and conjugal love are ordained for the procreation and education of children... 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.”<sup>6</sup>

Being a good mother or father means to undertake the responsibility “for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by *creating a home* where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for *education in the virtues*. This requires an apprenticeship in self-denial, sound judgment, and self-mastery – the preconditions of all true freedom. Parents should teach their children to subordinate the material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones. Parents have a grave responsibility to give good example to their children” reminds *the Catechism of the Catholic Church*.<sup>7</sup> That not only means parents’ obligations, but also rights and privileges. “Through the grace of the sacrament of marriage, parents receive the responsibility and privilege of *evangelizing their children*. Parents should initiate their children at an early age into the mysteries of the faith of which they are the “first heralds” for their children. They should associate them from their tenderest years with the life of the Church. A wholesome family life can foster interior dispositions that are a genuine preparation for a living faith and remain a support for it throughout one’s life.”<sup>8</sup>

The Popes during 20th and 21st century have called parents to be the ‘primary educators’ of their children. In *Letter to Families*, Pope John Paul II wrote:

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<sup>4</sup> *Declaration on Christian Education* no 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Declaration on Christian Education* no 6.

<sup>6</sup> *Declaration on Christian Education* no 48.

<sup>7</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* no 2223.

<sup>8</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* no 2225.

“Parents are the first and most important educators of their own children, and they also possess a fundamental competence in this area; they are educators because they are parents... The Church wishes to carry out her educational mission above all through families who are made capable of undertaking this task by the sacrament of matrimony, through the ‘grace of state’ which follows from it and the specific ‘charisma’ proper to the entire family community. Certainly, one area in which the family has an irreplaceable role is that of religious education.”<sup>9</sup>

Pope John Paul II, in his apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, has emphasized the sacred character of the parents’ work in education: “For Christian parents the mission to educate... has a new specific source in the sacrament of marriage, which consecrates them for the strictly Christian education of their children... it enriches them with wisdom, counsel, fortitude, and all the other gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to help the children in their growth as human beings and as Christians.”<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere, in the same letter, the Slavic Pope has referred to the right and duty of parents to give education as ‘essential’, ‘primary’, ‘inalienable’, and also ‘incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others’. This thought has been repeated in *The Family Rights Charter*: “Parents, as they have given life to children, have the primary, inalienable right and the priority in bringing up children, and therefore they have to be recognized as first and main educators.”<sup>11</sup>

In the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* no 68 the family is presented as first setting for catechesis with original and irreplaceable character. “The family’s catechetical activity has a special character, which is in a sense irreplaceable. This special character has been rightly stressed by the Church, particularly by the Second Vatican Council. Home catechesis by parents, which should begin from the children’s tenderest age, is already being given when the members of a family help each other to grow in faith through the witness of their Christian lives, a witness that is often without words but which perseveres throughout a day-to-day life lived in accordance with the Gospel. This catechesis is more incisive when, in the course of family events (such as the reception of the sacraments, the celebration of great liturgical feasts, the birth of a child, a bereavement) care is taken to explain the Christian or religious content of these events. But that is not enough: Christian parents must strive

<sup>9</sup> *Letter to Families* no 16.

<sup>10</sup> *Familiaris Consortio* no 38.

<sup>11</sup> The Apostolic See, *The Family Rights Charter*, article 5.

to follow and repeat, within the setting of family life, the more methodical teaching received elsewhere. The fact that these truths about the main questions of faith and Christian living are thus repeated within a family setting impregnated with love and respect will often make it possible to influence the children in a decisive way for life. The parents themselves profit from the effort that this demands of them, for in a catechetical dialogue of this sort each individual both receives and gives. Family catechesis therefore precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis. 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 Domestic Church remains the one place where children and young people can receive an authentic catechesis. Thus, there cannot be too great an effort on the part of Christian parents to prepare for this ministry of being their own children's catechists and to carry it out with tireless zeal. Encouragement must also be given to the individuals or institutions that, through person-to-person contacts, through meetings, and through all kinds of pedagogical means, help parents to perform their task: The service they are doing to catechesis is beyond price."

Home catechists need to take this teaching to hearts and respond generously with their time, respect, love, joy, attention, giving their personal care and tutoring of their offspring, but they do not catechise alone. The Church finds order in the principle of subsidiarity, according to which "a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to co-ordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good."<sup>12</sup> The principle of subsidiarity dictates that parents receive proper help from the Church in this obligation. "For parents by themselves are not capable of satisfying every requirement of the whole process of raising children, especially in matters concerning their schooling... Subsidiarity thus complements paternal and maternal love and confirms its fundamental nature, inasmuch as all other participants in the process of education are only able to carry out their responsibilities *in the name of the parents, with their consent* and, to a certain degree, *with their authorization*."<sup>13</sup> The Church,

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<sup>12</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* no 1883.

<sup>13</sup> *Letter to Families* no 16.



at the diocesan and parish levels, should in no way hinder parents from exercising their rights.

The role of parents in the process of shaping the child's faith has been also highlighted in *Evangelium Vitae*: "the family has a decisive responsibility. This responsibility flows from its very nature as a community of life and love, founded upon marriage, and from its mission to guard, reveal and communicate love. Here it is a matter of God's own love, of which parents are co-workers and as it were interpreters when they transmit life and raise it according to his fatherly plan. This is the love that becomes selflessness, receptiveness and gift. Within the family each member is accepted, respected and honoured precisely because he or she is a person; and if any family member is in greater need, the care which he or she receives is all the more intense and attentive. The family has a special role to play throughout the life of its members, from birth to death. It is truly *the sanctuary of life*: the place in which life-the gift of God-can be properly welcomed and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed, and can develop in accordance with what constitutes authentic human growth."<sup>14</sup> Consequently the role of the family in preparing children for the future family and creating a culture of life is decisive and irreplaceable.

The Christian family is called by God to proclaim, celebrate and serve the Gospel not only by word, but especially by example, and through everyday concrete actions and signs. Catholic parents' mission as first catechists includes teaching basic catechetical truth, introducing to prayer, liturgy and sacraments and serving others. In this way, family life becomes a service to God and people, expressed through solidarity as experienced within and around the family in the form of concerned, attentive and loving care.<sup>15</sup>

Today, many parents are exhausted, not able to secure the religious future of their offspring. That is why "The Church is called to cooperate with parents through suitable pastoral initiatives, assisting them in the fulfilment of their educational mission. She must always do this by helping them to appreciate their proper role and to realize that by their reception of the sacrament of marriage they become ministers of their children's education. In educating them, they build up the Church, and in so doing, they accept a God-given vocation."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Evangelium Vitae* no 92.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Evangelium Vitae* no 93.

<sup>16</sup> *Amoris Laetitia* no 85.

Nevertheless, it is not always so clear for parents with whom to cooperate, but in general they refer to institutions that are responsive to their needs.

### 3. Addressing today's challenges

The massive development of the ICT-society establishes a new understanding of communication among people, between the different generations in particular. With the worldwide use of mobile phones, the Internet, music, tablet, interactive video, and multiple forms of communication, people structure and restructure constantly new networks to interact and to organize daily life. Parents, exposed to the pressure of the new technology, the pace of work and socio-cultural changes want to secure their financial and social position. It results in the lack of time, physical and mental absence at home, and consequently causes emotional disorders of the children and youngsters. The permanent rush and lack of time also have a very negative influence upon the interpersonal relationships in the family. Keeping all this in mind, what form of parent catechesis is suitable? The main emphasis, in society today, is put upon immediacy, originality, upon the extraverted exhibition of the spectacular performance. The attention is diverted to the massive production. Hence, one of the major tasks of parental catechesis is to discern the current needs, recognise the real priorities, values and norms, and to support a Christian initiation and formation. The state school may offer the basic information about the world religions, but the evangelisation, proclaiming kerygma or initiation into the living faith is not connected with the educational institutions, but rather with family or parish.<sup>17</sup>

Adults do not fully realize how much young children and youngsters are left alone with the impact of multiple influences. According to Herman Lombaerts parents need to establish new ways of communication and foster a culture

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. E. Osewska, *Rodzina i szkoła w Polsce wobec współczesnych wyzwań wychowawczych*, Kraków 2020, wyd. UPJPII; *Wychowanie a wyzwania ponowoczesności*, ed. E. Osewska, Warszawa 2011, wyd. UKSW; *Rodzina i edukacja w zmaganiu o przyszłość Europy*, ed. E. Osewska, Tarnów 2016, wyd. PWSZ w Tarnowie; *Rodzina w społeczeństwie – relacje i wyzwania*, eds. E. Osewska, J. Stala, Kraków 2019, Wyd. UPJPII; *Zdrowa i mocna rodzina fundamentem społeczeństwa*, ed. J. Stala, Kraków 2019, Wyd. UPJPII; E. Osewska, *The Involvement of Lay Faithful in Consecratio Mundi*, "The Person and the Challenges" 7 (2017) Nr 2, pp. 81–92; E. Osewska, *Wspólnota rodzinna w służbie wychowania*, "Family Forum" 4 (2014), pp. 125–139; E. Osewska, B. Simonič, *A Civilization of Love according to John Paul II*, "The Person and the Challenges" 9 (2019) Nr 1, pp. 23–32.

of negotiation in order to talk among themselves and with the offspring, but more importantly to deal with the various, conflictive influences. Mothers and fathers in their role of 'parenting' cannot isolate themselves from the complex socialization and educative settings. So, they have to observe carefully what is emerging from the day-to-day life and listen carefully to what children and youngsters have to say about their experiences and discoveries.

Every person is unique and has an unrepeatable life experience. Valuing the personal growth of every person, is important to remember that the same person is also different in various life stages. A twenty or thirty year old parent differs from a sixty or seventy year old one. Every grown-up person is affected by the specific perception and sensation of many experiences, which influence their thinking, decision-making, life, identity, spirituality and the relationship with Jesus Christ, with others and with themselves. At the same time, a parent is called to respond to the specific challenges of each period of their and family life according to the needs of children and their own. So the complexity of each period of adulthood by should be taken into consideration in the process of the psychological and Christian maturation of an adult. Having that in mind, there is no one model of parent catechesis that can address a person's uniqueness and their openness to God. However, it may be helpful for a deeper and more complex understanding of parental vocation, gifts, crises and personal growth to prepare in ecclesial communities various forms of support for catechetical activities.

Maturing in faith means permanent and lifelong changes and transformations. These include experience, conceptions and relations which are linked to the faith in God. The key issues are personal freedom and decision making, by which people make relative two extremes: the conceptions that religious development is inbred and thus automated, and that the levels of belief depend exclusively on the impact of the environment. Faith gives meaning to human life, but – because of the uniqueness of every human being – not in a simple, straight line and is expressed with different intensity and in different ways.

In adult catechesis five main elements are taken into consideration: the starting point is the experience of the individual, followed by personal reflection, prayer time and internalization. Next comes sharing with others, and finally a look at practical implementation and life in the future. The first element in the adult catechesis immediately shows the importance of personal life experience. A catechist in a group of adults who knows the characteristics of the individual life stages in adulthood may recognize more easily during the time of sharing

what is happening to a person and how to help them to be able to face life challenges and to seek internal balance in accordance with life decisions, values and priorities.

A modern adult feels great responsibility for the future. On the other hand, they have the experience of how unpredictable it is despite increasing global interaction. Ethical issues are very topical, as well as the interest for the spiritual and transcendental. Noticeable in this situation is the primary human need for God and a relationship of trust and surrender. The catechesis of adults which allows for expressing and listening to God and other human beings is an excellent way for a person to check and consolidate their life direction, to discover their vocation in each period of life and in the entire life cycle and over the years become an increasingly redeemed person.<sup>18</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

The family, as a dynamic community, is a network of many mutual relationships that fosters adult development. What fosters the growth of one person fosters the growth of the other. Keeping in mind that many parents are living under stress, and most parents are overwhelmed by too many roles they have to fill, they need proper support from the ecclesial community, starting with openness, kindness, respect and love. The important fact connected with adulthood and Christianity is the specific responsibility of Catholics in postmodern society today. Christians deeply believe that, according to the Gospel, they have a vocation and mission to educate their children, but also to look after their own growth in faith.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. K. Bochenek, C. Mordka, J. Stala, *If There is No Religion: L. Kołakowski's Defence of the Sacred. Part 2 – a polemic*, “The Person and the Challenges” 13 (2023) Nr 1, pp. 25–36; K. Bochenek, C. Mordka, J. Stala, *If there is no Religion – L. Kołakowski's Defence of the Sacred. Part 1*, “The Person and the Challenges” 12 (2022) Nr 2, pp. 5–17; E. Osewska, J. Stala, K. Bochenek, *The Relationship between Religion and National Culture in Poland in Light of John Paul II's Philosophical and Theological Reflections*, “Religions” (2022) 13, 33; E. Osewska, J. Stala, *The Human Being Lost in Consumerism: A Polish Perspective and Challenges in Religious Education*, “Bogoslovni vestnik” 81 (2021) Nr 3, pp. 733–745; J. Stala, E. Osewska, K. Bochenek, *The Sufferings of the Biblical Job as an Icon of Postmodernity: The ‘loneliness’ of God and the human being in a consumerist paradise*, “Journal of Religion and Health” (2021).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. E. Osewska, J. Stala, *Celebrating Christmas in the Polish Family*, “Review of Religious Education and Theology” 1 (2021), pp. 103–113; J. Stala, J. Garmaz, *The Family ‘Communio*

Catholic parents are supposed to contribute to a systematic reflection upon the condition of education and religion in the society and about the main options to be taken for the future. Many socio-cultural changes cannot be predicted, but a lot of work can be done to equip ourselves for a sound discernment about possible responses to change, about options to be taken or not to be taken, and about the implications of particular decisions or actions.

The quality of parental catechesis is a delicate question. The one, only best model of adult catechesis probably does not exist. Different approaches to parental catechesis focus on different priorities like: aim, theological content, the development of the human person, faith development, the interaction with society and culture, and the quality of family life. What seems to be important is not only concentration on parents as first educators of their children, but also the response to the parents' needs as adults living in the family circle. Saint Irenaeus, a great theologian of the Church wrote, "The Glory of God is man fully alive." This idea presents not only the essence of God who is loving and open but underlines the dignity of the human being living as an integral self in the fullest capacity.

Taking that into consideration parents need catechesis that helps them to achieve their fullest capacity, to meet in a relatively autonomous way, create solidarity among themselves and discuss the different aspects of their family life and faith. They should be helped to learn for themselves what is at stake in the complementary interactions with God, Church, society, culture and clarify their perceptions, questions, proposals, and strategies for improving their parental role or certain aspects of catechesis. When helped to meet as parents, they should strengthen their competence in communicating faith to children, adults and other families. So, instead of concentrating mostly on children and youngsters, the catechists must remember, that if the parents are mature adult selves, then there is a good chance that the children can one day become mature adult selves in their own right, able to become caring parents for their own children.

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