

Family and Liturgy

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Introduction

All religions believe that family is a divine institution and that God is its author. For, He willed it and has made it so. Our Catholic Church also says that 'the Creator of all made the married state the beginning and foundation of human society' (cf. Eph 5:32). The Vatican II teaches that "by its very nature the institution of marriage and married love is ordered to the procreation and education of the offspring" (GS¹, 48). But "... refusing to acknowledge God as his source... man has broken the right order that should reign within himself as well as between himself and other men and all creatures" (GS, 13).

1. Family as Nucleus of Society

According to the sociologists, when a child is born, it is unblemished and impeccable just like a *tabula rasa* without any influence of the society. It is free from all sorts of external influences like the mother tongue, moral values, ethical influences, cultural identities, caste systems, religious indoctrination etc. So, it is principally the parents and family members who contribute to a large extent for the formation of a child's societal value systems, whether positive or negative.

The parents, as the first teachers, teach the child to speak, to drink, to eat, to crawl, to stand up, to walk, to invoke people respectfully (as dad, mum, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins, grandpa and granny) etc. When the child goes to the school, the teachers teach to read, write etc. By this process of socialization, the society transmits its own ideologies, value systems, cultural heritages, local traditions, moral values, ethical standards, dress codes, food habits, ceremonies, language, art, and dance to the new generation. The family is also responsible for the emotional, psychological and cultural growth of the child by making a life-long impact on it.

Thus the parents make a child grow into a good and responsible citizen useful to the society or become a social delinquent who will be a real threat to the welfare of the society. In short, it is only the family which can mould a child to grow into a good, integral and matured person.

2. Socialization and Church

The Church is also of the same view and says: "Catholics are to be keen on collaborating with all men of good will in the promotion of all that is true, just, holy, all that is worthy of love (cf. Phil 4:8)" (AA², 14). This implies that the "children and young people should be helped to develop harmoniously their physical, moral and intellectual capacities... to participate actively in the life of society in its various aspects" (GE³, 1).

The Church is very much convinced that it is an indispensable duty of the parents to educate their children. For it is said, "The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute. It is therefore duty of parents to create a family

atmosphere inspired by love and devotion to God and to their fellow-men which will promote an integrated, personal and social education of their children. The family is therefore the principal school of social virtues which are necessary to every society" (*GE*, 3).

3. Family as Nucleus of Faith

The religious life of a child also depends very much on the family. This is true of all the families whatever may be their religion. Therefore, for a Christian child also the family is the nucleus of its faith formation. Such a faith formation is greatly responsible for the character formation and life-style of the child. It is not an exaggeration to say that this faith formation leaves its lasting traits or impacts on the whole gamut of a Christian's life. In other words, this faith formation plays a very important and indispensable role in moulding the human, social, cultural, ethical, moral, psychological and spiritual values of a Christian.

So the first school of faith formation for a child is its mother's lap, while she herself is its first teacher. Along with her, the other family members also play a very vital role in this process. Pope Francis also confirms it: "It is therefore above all in the Christian family... that children should be taught to know and worship God and to love their neighbor in accordance with the faith which they have received in earliest infancy in the sacrament of Baptism" (*GE*, 3).

4. Nuclear Families

Until recent past most of the families in our society were joint-families, where people of even three or four generations lived together under one roof. But due to the industrialization and urbanization, these joint-families got slowly disintegrated giving way to the mushrooming of nuclear

families. As a result of this, the positive aspects which were once present in the joint – families – like living together, mutual understanding, acceptance of one another, experience of forgiveness, advice or counselling by the elders, acceptance of the weaker or disabled persons, emotional backing, moral standards, economic support, assurance of food, shelter and clothing, transmission of the family or traditional values and finally, the social control are now very much missing in the modern nuclear families.

The nuclear families now live in towns and cities in a multicultural cosmopolitan culture and are unable to give up the traditional values. So the family members make a compromise with this cosmopolitan culture which is in a 'melting pot' and enter into a comparatively free-society where there is no social control. They become slowly the victims of secularism, materialism, globalization and media world. As a result, they face a lot of problems. For, "while on the one hand... man is greatly helped by life in society, on the other hand it cannot be denied that he is often turned away from the good and urged to evil by the social environment in which he lives and is immersed since the day of his birth" (GS, 25).

So the problems enumerated a little above, tarnish, distort, disrupt and even destroy the Catholic nuclear families too. For, the Catholic couples also fail in their sincerity and faithfulness and search for separation or divorce more and more. The children are not properly educated and disoriented. Both the parents and children lack very much the advice, support, concern and encouragement of the elders in the nuclear families. Similarly neither the parents nor the children are serious about their much respected cultural, social or religious values. Hence there is an absence of the

much cherished ideals of mutual understanding, acceptance, forgiveness and sharing. On the contrary, there is a great dissatisfaction in life and lack of self-confidence which lead them sometimes to commit even suicide.

5. Family and Church

It is in this context, in his Apostolic Exhortation of *Evangelii Gaudium (EG)*, our Pope Francis says, "The causes of this breakdown include: a lack of opportunity for dialogue in families, the influence of the communications media, a relativistic subjectivism, unbridled consumerism which feeds the market, lack of pastoral care among the poor, the failure of our institutions to be welcoming, and our difficulty in restoring a mystical adherence to the faith in a pluralistic religious landscape" (*EG* 70). He also warns us against our spiritual worldliness which "consists in seeking not the Lord's glory but human glory and personal well-being... It is a subtle way of seeking one's "own interests, not those of Jesus Christ" (Phil 2:21)" (*EG* 93).

Therefore, it goes without saying that it is the most important duty of a Christian family to teach its children to know God, to love Him, to worship Him, and also to love their neighbours and serve them. Are our Catholic couples aware of this grave responsibility today? How far they are faithful to this duty? Do they really help their children to lead a life of prayer and initiate them into the liturgical life? Let us now see it in detail.

6. Liturgy in Old Testament

In the beginning the Jewish liturgy was family-centred. Namely, the Jews had the family priesthood in which the father or the eldest male member of the family (the Patriarch)

presided over the liturgy. For example, Abram, as a family priest, built an altar and offered the sacrifice (Gen 12:7). Then the Jews had the Levite priesthood (Levi was the third son of Jacob and Leah). That is, at the command of God, when Moses anointed with oil his brother Aaron, a Levite (Ex 28:1), this priesthood was born.

Later on the kings also served as priests in Israel. For example, Saul offered burnt offering and offerings of well-being (1 Sam 13:9); David sacrificed an ox and a fatling (2 Sam 6:13); Solomon blessed all the assembly of Israel (1 Kings 8:14); and Ahaz offered his burnt offering, grain offering and drink offering (2 Kings 16:13). After the reform of King Josiah, the Levite priesthood received an honourable and privileged position in Israel (2 Chr 35:2ff.).

7. Liturgy in Early Church

At the time of Jesus, there were three categories of priests in Israel: the High Priest, Chief Priests and Priests. But, as the Scriptures witness, Christ offered his sacrifice of the Cross once and for all for the salvation of the whole world as the Eternal, unique and only High Priest (Cf. Heb 5:10; 9:26). In order to continue His saving ministry on earth till the end of times, He instituted the Priesthood and Eucharist at the Last Supper and made his apostles become priests by commanding them: "Do this, in memory of me" (1 Cor 11:24-25; Lk 22:19). Hence the Church continues to fulfill this command even today through the liturgical ministry of the bishops, who are the successors of the apostles, and that of the priests who collaborate with them in this ministry.

In the early Church the Christians gathered together in houses for the celebration of the Eucharist. The Acts of the Apostles witnesses to this by saying that the believers "broke

the bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God” (Acts 2:46-47). As for the celebration of marriage, the early Church accepted the marriage structures as well as the cultural or traditional ceremonies and symbols of the newly converted Christians as valid, as far as possible. P. Jounel witnesses to this truth by saying that the Christian marriages in the third century were celebrated more or less in the same domestic set up as that of two pagans⁴.

8. Parents as Faith Formators

Pope Francis says that we cannot “overlook the fact that in recent decades there has been a breakdown in the way Catholics pass down the Christian faith to the young” (EG, 70). For, the Church has already said that the parents “should train their child in Christian doctrine” (LG⁵, 41). Let us not forget the words of Pope John Paul II: “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*”.⁶ He also says that they are “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” (FC⁷, 36).

That is why the Church asks during the Rite of Marriage, “Will you accept children lovingly from God, and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?”⁸. This means that “from the earliest years 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” (FC, 60; GE, 3). So a Catholic father or mother is truly an educator of faith, as such, “The *educator* is a person who ‘*begets*’ in a *spiritual sense*. From this point of view, *rearing children can be considered a genuine apostolate*”⁹.

Pope John Paul II observes: “The *mother*, even before giving birth, *does not only give shape to the child’s body, but also, in an indirect way, to the child’s whole personality*”¹⁰. He continues that “the family has an irreplaceable role... of religious education which enables the family to grow as a “domestic Church”¹¹ (LG, 62). Thus, “the Christian couples are... the first to pass on the faith to their children and to educate them in it... they offer them wise guidance in the choice of vocation, and if they discover a sacred vocation they encourage it with all care” (AA, 11).

9. Example of Holy Family

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph is the ideal and model for all Christian families. In the economy of salvation, Jesus was born of Mary according to the plan of God. As parents, Mary and Joseph were involved in the faith formation of Jesus:

- by giving him the name as the angel Gabriel had asked;
- by circumcising him on the eighth day after his birth according to the Jewish law;
- by instructing him on the basic tenets of Judaism;
- by sending him to learn the Torah;
- by instructing the customary Jewish ceremonies, feasts, rituals and religious practices;
- by encouraging him to go regularly to the synagogue for prayers;
- by accompanying him every year to Jerusalem on pilgrimage, etc.

All these show how Mary and Joseph, as responsible parents, were keen on bringing up their son Jesus in their Jewish religious faith.

10. What Family can Teach?

The parents are bound to teach the child at least a bare minimum of the basic Christian ideas, faith, customs, practices, prayers, etc. In a good and pious Catholic family the parents usually teach the child the following:

- To make the sign of the cross with the words, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen".
- To trace the sign of the cross on the forehead with holy water.
- To pronounce certain Christian terms like Amen, Alleluiah, Praise the Lord, Lord have mercy, Jesus saves me, Pray for us, etc.
- To invoke the names of Jesus and of the saints like Mary, Antony, etc.
- To sing a few lines or stanzas of our Christian or liturgical hymns.
- To memorize the basic prayers like Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory be to the Father, etc.
- To learn some biblical narratives like the Creation of world and human beings, the parables, the miracles, etc.
- To kiss the holy pictures or statues of Jesus, Mary, saints and also the religious objects like the Cross, Bible, Rosary, etc.
- To kneel down and pray with joined hands both at home and in church.
- To learn the rudimentary ideas on God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Angels, Mary, Apostles, Saints, Martyrs, heaven, hell, devil, etc.

- To understand the basic concepts of Prayer, Grace of God, Blessings of God, Holy Mass, Sacraments, etc.
- To go at least for the Sunday Mass and other sacraments.

11. Teaching on Liturgy

As a child grows up, the parents have to teach on what liturgy is. The purpose of 'liturgy' is to praise, thank and adore God, our Father. For, the Scripture itself says that God destined us through Jesus Christ according to his will "to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his graces that he lavished on us" (Eph 1:6-8). Hence the purpose of liturgy is to praise, thank and adore God, our Father, and his only Son Jesus Christ, the source of all blessings (GS, 48), who showers upon us his Holy Spirit through the sacraments in which we celebrate the saving Paschal Mysteries of his Passion, Death and Resurrection. That is why, St Peter says: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Pet 2:9).

Vatican II teaches that "liturgy is the summit.... From the liturgy, therefore, and especially from the Eucharist, grace is poured forth upon us as from a fountain" (SC¹², 10). It adds, "No other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and the same degree" (SC, 7). So naturally each Christian family, which is a domestic Church, is invited to participate meaningfully in liturgy and to savour its fruits to the maximum.

12. Participation in Liturgy

It is the indispensable duty of a Catholic family to guide and lead the child to have a full, conscious and active participation in the liturgical celebrations. What does it mean?

(a) *Full participation*: The parents and family members are expected to participate willingly, voluntarily and fully, especially in the Sunday mass and in other sacraments. But how far is it realized today? Do the children learn from their example? How often the parents go for Sunday Mass? How often do they go *late* for mass? Are they really involved or absorbed in it? Let us think over it.

(b) *Conscious participation*: In liturgy they must always be aware of what is being celebrated. For, they cannot act as machines and murmur the prayers mechanically. The prayers should not come from the lips but from the hearts. This implies a personal and conscious involvement in liturgy. So they “should not be there as strangers or silent spectators. On the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred action, conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full cooperation” (SC, 48).

(c) *Active participation*: “To promote the active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalms, antiphons, hymns, as well as by actions, gestures and bodily attitudes” (SC, 30). Hence liturgy is not a place to be lazy and idle. And they should not come there out of compulsion or pressure to sleep or doze or remain idle (SC, 14). The parents must realize that participation, both external and internal, is essential to take an active participation in liturgy.

13. Knowledge of Sacraments

Very often we participate in the sacraments without knowing them sufficiently well. This implies that a basic understanding of the sacraments which are needed to sanctify the different stages of a Christian's life (SC, 59; CCC¹³, 1152). For, "the purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men, to build up the body of Christ, and finally, to give worship to God. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen and express it. That is why they are called sacraments of faith. They do, indeed, confer grace..." (SC, 59). Further, "the life of Christ is communicated to those who believe and those, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ in his passion and glorification" (LG, 7).

Therefore, the parents have to instruct the child on the following matters. Namely, the sacraments are the channels of grace, instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ. They are to be celebrated with the faithful as a public celebration, for they are not private functions (SC, 26); but people's or parish or community celebrations (SC, 27). They are the visible signs of the invisible grace of God. Further, only when we celebrate them in a worthy manner with due preparation and proper attitudes, they can bring us the graces they signify. In this background, let us now see what the parents have to do concretely in the administration of sacraments. Here, let us limit ourselves to the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist.

14. Family and Baptism

After the birth of a child, the parents are to approach the parish priest first and ask for baptism. He has the responsibility to instruct the parents on baptism so that they may be able to understand its importance and bring up their

child respecting the commitments they undertake in baptism. He can do it either by himself or with the help of some parishioners who are trained for this purpose. This will help the parents to teach their child the following truths, namely:

- It is the first sacrament to enter into a close relationship with God and the Church.
- It makes the child to enter into the Paschal Mysteries of Christ (the passion, death and resurrection).
- To be born again in order to enter into a life of grace.
- During the celebration, the parents ask for baptism (or faith or eternal life) and as a sign of it they trace the sign of the cross on the child's forehead.
- They promise to bring up the child in Catholic faith and Christian charity.
- As a sign of it, they renounce Satan and make the profession of faith on behalf of the child.
- By the washing of the child's head with water all its sins are removed.
- By the anointing the head with the Holy Chrism, the child shares in the triple ministry of Christ who is Priest, Prophet and King.
- By the placing of a white cloth on the child, they accept the responsibility to help the child keep its soul free from any stain of sin.
- And by receiving the candle lit from the Paschal Candle, they accept to safeguard the light of Christ lit in child's soul.

Today are the parents really aware of these grave responsibilities? Are they sincerely convinced of the promises they make? Do they actually lead a model and exemplary

life? Let not the baptism become a mere ritual or routine which does not touch them at all.

15. Family and First Holy Communion

Parents must know that catechism for the children, who are going to receive the First Holy Communion, is very important. For, the children must be given the basic and sufficient instructions on the Bible, Penny Catechism, Liturgy, Eucharist, the importance of Holy Mass etc.

So, the First Holy communicants must be instructed on how to participate actively in the Holy Mass by saying the prayers, giving the proper responses, singing the hymns and adapting the recommended bodily postures and gestures fitting to the celebration. They must also be taught on how to behave inside the church, to use the holy water, to be pious and attentive, to show respect to the tabernacle, to pray before it and to make visits to it at least now and then.

Regarding the sacrament of Reconciliation, they are to be instructed on what is sin, the effects of sin, the ways to avoid sin, the need to feel sorry for them, the method of making confession, the necessity to confess the sins to a priest, carrying out the penance given by the priest and making a just reparation for the damage caused. Further, the parents also have the duty to guide their children to pray and find out whether they have a vocation to priesthood or religious life or family life.

The parents must always be keen on doing all that is necessary to help the child grow in piety and spirituality. It must be helped to learn the prayers of the Holy Mass by heart and encouraged to carry out at least one or two liturgical ministries as an altar server or lector or a member in the

choir. The child is to be guided to render some service to the church now and then by sweeping it, decorating it, cleaning the sacristy, adorning the altar, etc.

16. Family and Instruction on Eucharist

The sacrament of Eucharist is actually celebrated in the Holy Mass, which is also known as the Eucharistic celebration. In this Holy Mass the faithful communicate in the Body and Blood of Christ. So, both before and after receiving the First Holy Communion, the parents have a duty to instruct the child on the sanctity, dignity and importance of Eucharist. They must also instruct on the manner of showing reverence to it and receiving it regularly. All this cannot be done just in a day or two.

So, as parents, they have an obligation to instruct the child gradually and at the same time constantly on this great sacrament. If they have to do justice to this demand, laid upon them, they themselves must have at least something basic knowledge about the teachings of the Church on Eucharist. Let us now see below some of the important and salient features of Eucharist.

- The Holy Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Christ.
- It was prefigured by *Manna* in the Old Testament and was later instituted by Christ in the Last Supper.
- It is now celebrated sacramentally in the Holy Mass which is also the sacrifice of Christ and that of ours.
- Christ is truly present under the species of bread and wine consecrated by the priest in the mass.
- It is the sacrificial meal which is also our spiritual food or the bread of life. "From this *living bread* she (the Church) receives her nourishment (*EDE*¹⁴, 7).

- It nourishes not only our soul but also our body; and it can also heal our sicknesses.
- It builds up not only the Church but also the parish communities and our own families in faith, unity, love, forgiveness and sharing. For, “no Christian community is build up which does not grow from and hinge on the celebration of the most holy Eucharist. From this all education for community spirit must begin” (*PO*¹⁵, 6).
- He is present in it as God and man; with his Divine nature and human nature; and also with his own flesh and blood.
- In the Eucharist, which is reserved in the tabernacle of the church, Christ is truly and really present.
- It has to be visited and revered by the people of God as far as possible.
- People can remain before it for a longer time to meditate in silence, adore it and make personal prayers of praise and thanksgiving before it.
- It is to be adored in the Eucharistic Benediction because “the adoration of the *Blessed Sacrament*... becomes an inexhaustible source of holiness” (*EDE*, 10).
- It is the centre of all the sacraments as well as of the para-liturgical celebrations.
- “It is the most precious possession which the Church can have in her journey through history” (*EDE*, 9).
- It is both a gift from our Lord and also “*the gift par excellence*, for it is the gift of himself” (*EDE*, 11).
- It “contains the Church’s entire spiritual wealth” (*EDE*, 1).

- “It is in some way the anticipation of heaven, *the pledge of our future glory*... a medicine of immortality and an antidote to death” (EDE, 18).

17. Family and Holy Mass

From the first century onwards the Holy Mass or the “Breaking of the Bread” has occupied a central place in the life of Christian families. In other words, it has always had an important and central place in the life of the early Christians. It can be understood from the life of the First Roman Martyrs and the Abithen Martyrs, who confessed their love for Mass and professed that ‘we cannot remain without going for mass’. Even today the Church teaches us that the Mass and sacraments consecrate all the members of a family (GS, 59; CCC, 1152). And it continues to be so even today.

Therefore, the parents must instruct their child, from its early childhood, to participate in the Holy Mass actively, attentively, meaningfully and fruitfully. By their own example, they have to teach the child to go for Mass on time and not to be present there just as a spectator. It has to be also said very clearly that the elevation of the consecrated Host or Chalice is not the only important time in the Mass.

They cannot simply ask the children to go for mass, while they themselves remain idle at home without going for mass. In this matter, they have to be a good model to the children by their own example and avoid being scandalous (GS, 48). By their staunch faith, fervent prayers, matured guidance, parental suggestions and practical instructions, they must accompany their children in all liturgical matters.

In this matter, they should imitate the example of the Holy Family. Like Mary and Joseph who were really interested

in bringing up the child Jesus in the Jewish faith and liturgy, the Catholic parents of today also must devote themselves to the same sacred duty (GS, 49) and initiate the liturgical life in their children. If there are problems and scandals in the family, they cannot fulfil this duty imposed upon them in the desired manner. Such a family or parents would only be a bad example or scandal to the faith formation of the children.

18. Family and Prayer

Prayer is very much lacking today in our Catholic families and in our modern Christian culture. For the television, computer and other media have taken up the place or the time of prayer. Are the Catholic parents today really interested in teaching the child the first lessons of prayer? We know well that “the family which prays together remains always together” even in times of difficulties and trials. For, ‘one who does not pray, dies by himself’ says St John Chrysostom (St John of Golden Mouth).

We have to remember that the “family prayer has its own characteristic qualities. It is prayer offered in common, husband and wife together, parents and children together” (FC, 59). In this way, the parents are to initiate a taste and love for both common prayers and personal prayers. It has different purposes like praising God, thanking God, reading the Word of God, meditating on the Word of God, making petitions to God, worshipping God etc.

Taking into account all these, the Pope Francis says the following: “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 in to personal, family and social life. We... hope, that when the family gathering

together becomes a time of prayer the rosary is a frequent and favored manner of praying" (FC, 61). In this background "inspired by the example and family prayer of their parents, children... will more easily set out upon the path of a truly human training, of salvation, and of holiness" (GS, 48).

19. Family and Liturgy of Hours

Actually our Catholics are very much ignorant about this prayer, which is regulated by the official liturgical rules of the Church. It is called as the 'Prayer of the Church' because it is to be prayed by all the faithful. For, in this prayer Christ "attaches to himself the entire community of mankind and has them join him in singing his divine song of praise.... It is the very prayer which Christ himself together with his Body addresses to the Father" (SC, 83).

It is also known as the 'Liturgy of the Hours' because its aim is to sanctify and consecrate the day and night and also every hour or minute to God. For, the "purpose of the office is to sanctify the day" (SC, 88), In praying this, we follow the example of Christ who commanded us, like the Apostles and Saints, 'to keep watch and pray unceasingly'. St Paul also exhorted us to 'pray without ceasing' (1 Thess 5:17; cf. SC, 86). When we pray this Liturgy of the Hours, it is Christ himself who leads it and prays with us as our Master, Leader and High Priest. He unites the whole Church with him, in singing the praises of God with the entire creation for the salvation of the world.

This prayer is also known as the 'Divine Office' because the sacred ministers and those in the sacred orders have received a mandate or special commission to pray daily this official prayer without fail. They have a duty to pray it, even if the lay people are not present. But our people think wrongly

that it is a prayer to be recited only by the priests and religious. They do not know actually that the Church recommends them also to pray it along with them as far as possible. But it is unfortunate that the parish priests neither introduce this prayer to the lay faithful nor invite them to pray it along with the clergy and religious either before or after the parish mass.

But the parish priest cannot ignore this responsibility laid upon them. For, according to “the venerable tradition of the universal Church, *Lauds* as morning prayer, and *Vespers* as evening prayer, are the two hinges on which the daily office turns. They must be considered as chief hours and are to be celebrated as such” (SC, 89a). Therefore, “Pastors of souls should see to it that the principle hours, especially *Vespers*, are celebrated in common in church in Sundays and on the more solemn feasts. The laity, too, are encouraged to recite the divine office, either with the priests, or among themselves, or even individually” (SC, 100).

As such, the parents also have a duty to pray it as a family with their children at home. Further, being the domestic sanctuary of the Church, it is recommended to celebrate at least some parts of this prayer daily either at home or in the parish church with the clergy and religious. It would surely enrich the prayer life of the children.

20. Family and Popular Devotions

While the Church teaches that “the liturgy by its very nature is far superior to any of them (the popular devotions)” (SC, 13), it is also conscious that the liturgy may not be able to satisfy all the inner spiritual emotions, aspirations and needs of the Christian people. That is why, in his Exhortation of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN), Pope Paul IV stated that popular

piety “manifests a thirst for God which only the poor and the simple can know” (*EN*, 48).

Therefore, it is in this background that the Church says that “the spiritual life, however, is not solely limited to participation in the liturgy” (*SC*, 12). For this reason, the Church not only allows but also recommends the people to celebrate the popular devotions, whether of the universal Church or of the particular Churches, provided they have proper approval from the ecclesiastical authorities.

This is very much needed in today’s modern secular world to grow stronger in faith. For, the “popular piety enables us to see how the faith, once received, becomes embodied in a culture and is constantly passed on” (*EG*, 123). In this connection, making a reference to Pope Benedict XVI speaking about the Latin America, Pope Francis pointed out that popular piety is “a precious treasure of the Catholic Church”, in which “we see the soul of the Latin American peoples” (*EG*, 123). This makes clear that the popular devotions also have an important role to play in the faith formation of our children and the parents should do the needful without any hesitation.

21. Family as a School

A School of Humanity

Realizing the importance of family, the Vatican II says that it is a ‘school’ in which the children learn the human qualities necessary to live in a society. It even goes to the extent of saying that the family is ‘a school of deeper humanity’ or ‘a school of human enrichment’, where the father and the mother are the first teachers. For, it says, “The active presence of the father is very important for their (children’s) training; the mother too, has a central role in the home for the children,

especially the younger children, depend on her considerably” (GS, 52). In his Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (FC), Pope John Paul II also says that the family is a place, “where there is care and love for the little ones, the sick, the aged; where there is mutual service every day; when there is a sharing of goods, of joys and of sorrows” (FC, 21). All this is depends very much upon the care evinced and training given by the parents.

A School of Faith

A Catholic family, as a school of faith, must have a crucifix in the house as a sign or symbol of its Christian faith and redemption. But it is sad to note that some of our Catholics have a very wrong idea that the crucifix would bring along with it untold sufferings and difficulties for the family. This is wrong and even superstitious. On the contrary, the family members should have a special love for the cross and kneel down before the crucifix for the daily family prayer. They can also pray their daily rosary before it.

Besides this, the family must see to it that the children participate regularly in the sacraments, especially in the sacrament of Reconciliation and receives the Most Holy Communion. The parents must give top most priority to the Sunday Mass which should never be missed. They must inculcate the same spirit in their children too. They can also encourage the children to involve in the parish liturgical activities through the *Anbiam*s and the parish liturgical team. Further, they can also take with them the children to participate in the Popular Devotions like the rosary, Way of the Cross, novenas to saints, pilgrimages, car processions etc. Through these means, the parents can definitely help the children to grow in their faith day by day.

A School of Christian Life and Virtues

It is a school in which a child can learn the virtues of love, obedience, unity, pardon, sharing, forgiveness, etc. It can also learn that family is not a place of judgment, condemnation and punishment. The love, interpersonal relationships, moral support and forgiveness experienced in the family will help the child also to reciprocate the same. All this will lead the child to experience in liturgy the invisible divine love, to relate itself intimately to God and ultimately to experience his support, mercy and forgiveness. Such lived-experiences obtained both from the family and liturgy will also help the child to reflect the same in all its dealings with other humans.

22. Some Useful Tips

- Dear Parents, please free your children from the current snares of globalization, consumerism and media-world so that your family can become a real school of faith, prayer, liturgy and worship.
- Try relentlessly to encourage your children to go to the church to make personal visits to the most Blessed Sacrament and to make personal prayers every now and then.
- Explain your children on the importance and need of holy water both, whether it is used in the church or at home.
- Be a member at least in one of the pious associations in your parish and work for the common good of the parishioners as far as possible.
- We know that “Charity begins at home”. So be generous in extending your help not only to the parish church but

also to the suffering people in order that your children may learn to practise the most important Christian virtue of charity.

- Be active members of your *Anbiam*s and involve both in the preparation and in the celebration of the parish Sunday Liturgy.
- Take part in the seminars, especially in the biblical, catechetical and liturgical seminars conducted either at the parish or vicariate or diocesan or regional level.

Conclusion

We all know well the famous dictum, "Practice is the best policy". Therefore, nothing can be more convincing to a child than the personal witness of its parents, who practise really and sincerely what they say or teach. In other words, any amount of passionate, attractive or alluring words will be of no avail, if they themselves do not live according to what they say. For, the children of today believe only your exemplary life and not your attractive words. Hence, instead of teaching by mere words, you have a grave responsibility to teach your child through your own lived-examples and a life of witness. But it is very sad to note that there is a great discrepancy between the words and actions of many of our parents today. Saying one thing and do something else will not be convincing to the children. Let this Year of Family help the families, especially the parents, in this regard.

Dr S. Arokiaraj
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Endnotes

¹ *Gaudium et Spes* (The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), in Vatican Council II, St. Paul's Publications, Mumbai, 2007.

² *Apostolicam Auctuositatem* (The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity), in Vatican Council II, St. Paul's Publications, Mumbai, 2007.

³ *Gravissimum Educationis* (The Declaration on Christian Education), in Vatican Council II, St. Paul's Publications, Mumbai, 2007.

⁴ Cf. P. Jounel, "La liturgie romaine du mariage. Etapes de son elaboration",

La Maison-Dieu 50 (1957), 36; Cf. S. Arokiaraj, *A Study of Marriage Rites: Roman, Chaldean & Indian Traditions*, ATC Publications, Bangalore, 2007, p. 49.

⁵ *Lumen Gentium* (The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), in Vatican Council II, St. Paul's Publications, Mumbai, 2007.

⁶ John Paul II, *Letter to Families from Pope John Paul II*, Pauline Publications, Bombay, 1994, 60.

⁷ *Familiaris Consortio* (On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World), in Apostolic Exhortations of Pope John Paul II, Carmel International Publishing House, Trivandrum, 2005.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹² *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), in Vatican Council II, St. Paul's Publications, Mumbai, 2007.

¹³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, TPI, Bangalore, 2012.

¹⁴ *Ecclesia De Eucharistia*, Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II, Carmel International Publishing House, Trivandrum, 2003.

¹⁵ *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (The Decree on the Life and Ministry of Priests), in Vatican Council II, St. Paul's Publications, Mumbai, 2007.