Catechist Formation Session Objectives

Cat 104: Catechetical Method and Practice

Session 6 – The Role of Parents as Primary Educators

Background Material

- General Directory for Catechesis #5.
- John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio.
- Catechism of the Catholic Church #2196-2257 (The Fourth Commandment).

Session Goal:

In this session, participants will learn the Catholic understanding of the family’s role in the life of the individual, society and the Church. We will explore briefly three key definitions of the family as given by the Magisterial documents of the Church and emphasized in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC). In particular, we will see the family as a communion of persons, the original cell of society, and the domestic church. Finally, we will discuss the family’s role in the pastoral work of the Church.

Three questions adults might have about this topic. What life-issues do I need to connect with in the people at my session?

1. How can we eliminate the ‘drop off’ mentality that so many parents have when it comes to their children’s catechesis?

2. How can we reach out to parents who are struggling in their faith and in their marriages?

3. How can we evangelize parents today?

Essential Points for the Teaching. Add in sub-points as needed. What points need to be made explicit and cannot be left to chance?

1. A family is (CCC #2202):
   a. A man and woman united in marriage.
   b. Together with children.
2. The family is a communion of persons, and as such the family is:

   a. Reflective of God's Trinitarian nature.

   Begin by reading the following quotes from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the Bible:

   The Christian Family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. In the procreation and education of children it reflects the Father’s work of creation. It is called to partake of the prayer and sacrifice of Christ. Daily prayer and the reading of the Word of God strengthen it in charity. The Christian family has an evangelizing and missionary task (CCC #2205).

   Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply(…) (Genesis 1:27-28.)

   God is One in being, Three in Person. One way of understanding this is that God’s being is familial. He is relational and one at the same time. He is a communion of Divine Persons.

   b. Grounded in the fruitful complementarily between male and female.

   Humankind is created as a communion of persons. The family “enfleshes” the image of God in the world. This is concretely given to men and women in their sexuality, in being created male and female.

   The naturally fertile sexual union of love is clearly a blessing, the first blessing spoken to man by God, in Genesis 1. Genesis 2 establishes the relationship of man and woman as spousal, and marriage as normative.

   When challenged about the nature and/or practical implications of marriage, both Christ himself (Matthew 19) and St. Paul (Ephesians 5) quote these words of Genesis in their teaching.

   c. Given the foundational directive of marriage as its God-given and natural basis.

3. The family is the domestic church, and as such:

   Begin by reading the following quote from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

   The Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion, and for this reason it can and should be called a domestic church.” (see
Familiaris Consortio and Lumen Gentium) It is a community of faith, hope and charity; it assumes singular importance in the Church, as is evident in the New Testament (CCC #2204).

a. Is a concrete community of believers.

The family truly is a concrete community of believers, or a “church in miniature.” By their baptism, each member of the family is a new creation, and contributes to the family’s reality as a “little church.”

b. Is the first place of the announcement of the Gospel.

c. Is the primary place where children are educated in the Catholic Faith.

Among the duties of parents toward their children are (CCC #2221-2231, see handout below):

1. The duty to educate children.
2. The duty respect, forgive, and show affection to their children.
3. The duty to discipline and raise them toward virtue.
4. The duty to initiate children into a sense of solidarity and communal responsibility.
5. The duty to evangelize their children, educating them in the faith and growth in holiness.
6. The duty to provide for their physical and spiritual needs.
7. The right to choose a school for their children. Once they become adults, children have the right to choose their profession and state of life.

In other words, parents have the work of Church leadership to do in their own home, leading their family to a truly ecclesial encounter within the home and a missionary zeal that reaches beyond the home.

d. Works with the parish in raising the children in the faith.

The parish has an important role in assisting the family in catechizing their children:

“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 #2226).”

Emphasis must be placed, on the fact that the parish must not conceive of itself or act as the replacement of the parents in catechesis. Such efforts that remove the responsibility of the parents for catechetical teaching of their children are contrary to Church teaching.

Following the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, and recognizing the know one knows their children better than the parents, the parish should make efforts to uphold this parental role and authority and support it with the most helpful materials and training.
e. Is the original cell of society.

We read in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

The family is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life. Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society. The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honor God, and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society (CCC #2207).

Here we see the fundamental importance of the family, based on marriage, for society. An institution more capable of teaching a young person to “make good use of freedom” is impossible, if not incomprehensible. No other human institution, not the state, the school or the daycare center, can be an adequately human community without the aid of the primordial community, the family.

f. Is to be taken into consideration on every level of pastoral work.

From John Paul II’s document on the role of the family in the modern world, *Familiaris Consortio* #70: “No plan for organized pastoral work, at any level, must ever fail to take into consideration the pastoral care of the family.”

**Questions for Discussion.**

1. Given the definition of family in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #2202 (see point #1 above), how can we promote this reality in a culture that often denies the nature of family?

2. Describe family life today. What forces help families live their calling as ‘domestic church’? What forces hinder that call?

3. How can you, as a catechist, better work with parents, the primary educators of the children? Come up with three practical ways you can strengthen your relationship with them?

**Closing Prayer**

After gathering everyone for prayer, invite everyone to pray this prayer from Pope John Paul II’s *Ecclesia in America* to Jesus Christ for the evangelization of the families of America:

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We thank you, Lord Jesus,
because the Gospel of the Father's love,
with which you came to save the world,
has been proclaimed far and wide in America
as a gift of the Holy Spirit
that fills us with gladness.
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We thank you for the gift of your Life, which you have given us by loving us to the end: your Life makes us children of God, brothers and sisters to each other.
Increase, O Lord, our faith and our love for you, present in all the tabernacles of the continent.

Grant us to be faithful witnesses to your Resurrection for the younger generation of Americans, so that, in knowing you, they may follow you and find in you their peace and joy. Only then will they know that they are brothers and sisters of all God's children scattered throughout the world.

You who, in becoming man, chose to belong to a human family, teach families the virtues which filled with light the family home of Nazareth.

May families always be united, as you and the Father are one, and may they be living witnesses to love, justice and solidarity; make them schools of respect, forgiveness and mutual help; so that the world may believe; help them to be the source of vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life, and all the other forms of firm Christian commitment.

Protect your Church and the Successor of Peter, to whom you, Good Shepherd, have entrusted the task of feeding your flock. Grant that the Church in America may flourish and grow richer in the fruits of holiness.

Teach us to love your Mother, Mary, as you loved her. Give us strength to proclaim your word with courage in the work of the new evangelization, so that the world may know new hope.
Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America, pray for us!

End your session with a time of intercessions and a Hail Mary