

FAMILY LIFE, PRAYING WITH CHILDREN,  
PARENTAL RESPONSABILITIES



# HOW DO CHILDREN BECOME ACTIVE SUBJECTS WITHIN THE DOMESTIC CHURCH?

## REFLECTIONS ON A NEGLECTED ASPECT WITHIN ROMAN CATHOLIC ECCLESIOLOGICAL DISCOURSE ON THE DOMESTIC CHURCH

### CHILDREN WITHIN THE DOMESTIC CHURCH IN MAGISTERIAL TEACHING FROM *LUMEN GENTIUM* TO THE *CATECHISM* OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

#### *Vatican II*

*Lumen Gentium* 11 rediscovered the rich idea that the Christian family “is, as it were, the domestic church”<sup>1</sup>. We have to thank one bishop for the rediscovery of this ancient Patristic notion, bishop Pietro Fiordelli of Prato, Italy, himself an active member of the Christian Family Movement. When he brought up this point during the discussion on the first draft of what later would become the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, he was interrupted by Cardinal Alfrink who did not understand how a reflection on the family could be ecclesiologicaly relevant. The bishop, however, was able to substantiate his request by referring to the teaching of the Church fathers and, therefore, his idea could be integrated in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church as an illustration of the spirit of resourcement which was so much typical for Vatican II<sup>2</sup>.

1. References to the teaching of the councils are taken from N.P. TANNER (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, London, Sheed & Ward; Washington, DC, Georgetown University Press, 1990. The notion of domestic church is certainly not an exclusively Roman Catholic one and received much attention by Protestant theologians as well. See e.g. the following quotation from Calvin’s Commentary on 1 Corinthians: “What a wonderful thing to put on record, that the name ‘church’ is applied to a single family, and yet it is fitting that all the families of believers should be organized in such a way as to be so many little churches”. See F. CAFFREY BOURG, *Where Two or Three are Gathered: Christian Families as Domestic Churches*, Notre Dame, IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 2004, p. 11. The explanation is given by M.A. FOLEY, *Toward an Ecclesiology of the ‘Domestic Church’*, in *Église et théologie* 27 (1996) 351-373, p. 357: “With the Protestant Reformers, marriage and the family rather than the monastery came to be seen as the ideal setting for the Christian life”.

2. See for a more complete description of the history of the redaction of *Lumen Gentium* 11, M.A. FAHEY, *The Christian Family as Domestic Church at Vatican II*, in *Concilium* 1995/4, 85-92.

In the next draft the conciliar teaching on the people of God as a whole and on the laity formed part of the third chapter ‘De populo Dei et specieatim de laicis’. The document indicates for a number of sacraments how they constitute a perfect illustration of the priestly character of the people of God. This is also the case for the sacrament of marriage, out of which the family comes forth<sup>3</sup>. At this stage the family is being compared to but not equated with the notion of domestic church by making use of the Latin particle *veluti*. In pretty much the same way the Church has been compared to a sacrament by way of analogy in the opening paragraph of *Lumen Gentium*. Christ is the only one who unreservedly deserves to be called the sacrament of God’s salvific presence among his people. The Church participates in his sacramental mission, and now the Council fathers make it clear that the Christian family is the smallest unit of ecclesial life which participates in this sacramental mission<sup>4</sup>. While reflecting on the family as domestic Church, the council fathers focused almost exclusively on the role of the parents as “the first preachers of the faith”. At this point the bishops quoted Saint Augustine who had reminded his audience in a sermon that the father of the household was traditionally called “Episcopus”, because his task is to watch over those belonging to his household. Even if the draft still states that both parents “almost exercise an episcopal function” (*quasi munus episcopale*), bishop Fiordelli luckily was able to convince his brethren that this reference to Augustine was reminiscent of hierarchical relations in the family which do no longer reflect the contemporary situation<sup>5</sup>.

In the final version of *Lumen Gentium*, the reflection on the family as domestic church forms part of the first section of chapter two on ‘The people of God’. The general reflection on the participation of the entire people of God in the priestly office of Christ in LG 10 is followed by a reflection in LG 11 on how the priestly community actively takes part in all sacraments. In our text, the emphasis is again on the role of parents as preachers of the faith. I believe therefore that the reflection on the family as *ecclesia domestica* could also have been placed in LG 12 which

3. Cf. *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II* (Vatican City 1960-1989), Vol. II, pars 1, 259.

4. The link between LG 11 and the sacramental definition of the Church in *Lumen Gentium* 1 is further highlighted in BOURG, *Where Two or Three are Gathered* (n. 1), pp. 31-32. Further reflections on the notion of church as sacrament are given in P. DE MEY, *Church as Sacrament: A Conciliar Concept and Its Reception in Contemporary Theology*, in L. BOEVE – J. RIES (eds.), *The Presence of Transcendence: Thinking ‘Sacrament’ in a Postmodern Age* (Annua Nuntia Lovaniensia, 42), Leuven, Peeters, 2001, 181-196.

5. His most important interventions are to be found in *AS*, vol. I, pars 4, 309-311; vol. II, pars 1, 794-795 and vol. II, pars 3, 21-24.

deals with the participation of the people of God in the prophetic office of Christ. Luckily, compared to the previous draft, the text insists that the religious education of the parents takes place “by word and by example” and, whereas the previous version paid special attention to the family as a place where sacred vocations can develop, the final version speaks about the parents’ task of “encouraging each in her or his vocation and paying special attention to a sacred vocation”. One cannot really say, however, that much attention is given to the active role of children within the domestic Church.

In the Declaration on Christian Education, *Gravissimum educationis*, education in the family also appears to be a rather unidirectional process starting from the parents<sup>6</sup>. The parents seem to be the agents of Christian education and the children the receivers. The tone changes in the Decree on the apostolate of the laity, *Apostolicam actuositatem*. Here we find a beautiful paraphrase of the expression *ecclesia domestica* in the idea that the family not only receives the divine mission “to be the primary living cell of society” (*prima et vitalis cellula societatis*) but also “to be like a domestic sanctuary in the church” (*tamquam domesticum sanctuarium ecclesiae*).

The family received from God the mission to be the primary living cell of society. It can fulfil this mission by showing itself, in the mutual loyalty of its members and in shared prayer offered to God, to be like a domestic sanctuary in the church; when the whole family is involved together in the liturgy; and when it offers generous hospitality and promotes justice and other good works in the service of the needy.

In this text attention is given to the contribution of all family members, but without differentiating between the roles of parents and children. The Pastoral constitution on the church in the world of today, *Gaudium et spes*, once again points to the responsibility of the parents in the family. “With parents leading them by example and family prayer, children and all who live within the family circle will more readily discover the way to humanity, salvation and holiness” (GS 48). For the first time, a conciliar document explicitly turns its attention to the children as well. “As active members of the family (*ut viva familiae membra*), children contribute in their own way to the sanctification of their parents” (*ibid.*).

### *Paul VI*

Pope Paul VI published his post-synodal exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975) on the third anniversary of the closing of Vatican II. When

6. See GE 3.

reflecting on “the evangelizing action of the family in the evangelizing apostolate of the laity” (EN 71), the Pope recalled how the family has been given “the beautiful name of ‘domestic church’” during the Second Vatican Council<sup>7</sup>. This means for the Holy Father that “there should be found in every Christian family the various aspects of the entire Church”. Of course, given the emphasis on evangelization in his exhortation, the Pope especially focuses on the proclamation of the Gospel within the family. Here, we find a very powerful passage about active participation of children within the domestic Church. We will see that John Paul II will only repeat, but not develop this aspect in his own teaching. The reflection by Pope Paul VI deserves to be quoted in full:

In a family which is conscious of this mission, all the members evangelize and are evangelized. The parents not only communicate the Gospel to their children, but from their children they can themselves receive the same Gospel as deeply lived by them<sup>8</sup>.

### *John Paul II*

Already in his opening homily of the 1980 synod of bishops on the family, it became clear that Pope John Paul II had thoroughly received the teaching of *Lumen Gentium*, that the family constitutes the Church in its fundamental dimension, and therefore deserves to be called a domestic Church. The third part of his post-synodal exhortation on the family, *Familiaris consortio* (1981), specifically focuses on the role of the Christian family<sup>9</sup>. He insists that “the grace and responsibility of building day by day a communion of persons” is the responsibility of “all members of the family, each according to his or her own gift” (21). When the Pope mentions the example of education he is aware of the fact that education is not merely the responsibility of the parents: “A fundamental opportunity for building such a communion is constituted by the educational exchange between parents and children, in which each gives and receives” (*ibid.*). Later on, the Pope repeats the idea of his predecessor in this respect that “all the members evangelize and are evangelized”. The family

7. This is not entirely correct, given the analogical language used by the council fathers.

8. See, for a very positive appraisal of this statement, N. PROVENCHER, *Vers une théologie de la famille: L'Église domestique*, in *Église et théologie* 12 (1981) 9-34, p. 26.

9. In my contribution I only deal with the attention of these documents to the active involvement of children. For comments on other aspects of *Familiaris consortio* relevant for developing an ecclesiology of the domestic church, see FOLEY, *Toward an Ecclesiology of the 'Domestic Church'* (n. 1), pp. 363-367 and BOURG, *Where Two or Three are Gathered* (n. 1), *passim*.

deserves to be called domestic Church, because she participates in the threefold mission of Christ. The family participates in the prophetic function of Christ in her capacity of being “a believing and evangelizing community”. The Pope, however, speaks almost exclusively about the religious education of the children by their parents. The Christian family participates in the priestly function of Christ as “a community in dialogue with God”. Finally, she participates in the royal function of Christ by being “a community at the service of man”<sup>10</sup>.

### *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*

The 1992 Catechism of the Catholic Church speaks about the family in the last subsection of its teaching on the sacrament of matrimony, a subsection which is entitled ‘The domestic church’. In the first two paragraphs, the close relationship between church and family is unfolded by first drawing attention to the nature of the church as “the family of God” and then referring to the teaching of Vatican II on the family as *Ecclesia domestica* (1655-1656). It is significant for the rather pessimistic worldview of the Catechism that the unbelieving world serves as *tertium comparationis* between the domestic church in the ancient church and the domestic church today. The final line of n° 1655, saying about the ancient church that “these families who became believers were islands of Christian life in an unbelieving world” is followed by the following opening line of n° 1656: “In our own time, in a world often alien and even hostile to faith, believing families are of primary importance as centers of living, radiant faith”. The catechism further explains how “the father of the family, the mother, children, and all members of the family exercise the *priesthood of the baptized*” (1657). Only here and without elaboration, the children are mentioned as independent agents within the domestic

10. Florence Bourg makes the important criticism that Pope John Paul II connects the duty of parents to participate in the threefold office of Christ too much to the grace received in the sacrament of marriage, than to the grace which every Christian receives through baptism. She calls this the ‘marriage or baptism issue’. In FC 5, for example, it is first said that “the sense of faith ... is a gift that the Spirit gives to all the faithful”. A few lines later, however, the Pope states that “Christian spouses and parents ... are qualified for this role by their charism or specific gift, the gift of the sacrament of matrimony”. In FC 38 the Pope teaches: “The sacrament of marriage gives to the educational role the dignity and vocation of being really and truly a ‘ministry’ of the Church at the service of the building up of her members”. The comment of Bourg is very much relevant: “While no one would question that married parents have a solemn duty to educate their children, or that education is a creative activity, it is not clear why the sacrament of marriage, rather than baptism, gives parental education its character as a ‘true ministry of the Church’”. See BOURG, *Where Two or Three are Gathered* (n. 1), pp. 72-78.

church. The subsection on the domestic Church luckily ends with a plea not to forget the great number of single persons. "The doors of homes, the 'domestic churches', and of the great family which is the Church must be open to all of them" (1658).

CHILDREN WITHIN THE DOMESTIC CHURCH IN CHURCH DOCUMENTS  
WITH A REGIONAL SCOPE

*"Follow the way of love"*

*"Follow the way of love"*: *pastoral message to families* is a document published by the bishops' conference of the United States in November 1993 in order to prepare for the 1994 United Nations International Year of the Family<sup>11</sup>. This document has been written in a much more colloquial style than the documents which I have discussed before and it addresses the family directly. It is the first document on this theme published by an authoritative source within the Roman Catholic Church which pays so much attention to the active role of children. One of the testimonies in the opening section 'Families are a sign of God's presence' can already serve as an illustration of this:

"My child asks me such mystical questions", reports a young mother. "I learn so much" (435).

Thereafter the American bishops explain the teaching of the Council that the Christian family can be called a domestic church or church of the home.

(...) The point of the teaching is simple, yet profound. As Christian families, you not only belong to the church, but your daily life is a true expression of the church (436).

The description of evangelization and religious education in the family pays as much attention to the role of the parents as to that of their children:

You evangelize by professing faith in God, acting in accord with Gospel values and setting an example of Christian living for your children and for others. And your children, by their spontaneous and genuine spirituality, will often surprise you into recognizing God's presence (*ibid.*).

You educate. As the primary teachers of your children, you impart knowledge of the faith and help them to acquire values necessary for Christian living. Your example is the most effective way to teach. Sometimes they

11. *"Follow the way of love"*: *Pastoral message to families*, in *Origins* 23 (1993) 433-443.

listen and learn; sometimes they teach you new ways of believing and understanding. Your wisdom and theirs come from the same Spirit (*ibid.*).

In a moving way, the document makes it clear that God appreciates our human and sometimes poor ways of being a domestic church.

No domestic church does all this perfectly. But neither does any parish or diocesan church. All members of the church struggle daily to become more faithful disciples of Christ. We need to enable families to recognize that they are a domestic church. There may be families who do not understand or believe they are a domestic church. Maybe they feel overwhelmed by this calling or unable to carry out its responsibilities. Perhaps they consider their family too “broken” to be used for the Lord’s purposes. But remember, a family is holy not because it is perfect, but because God’s grace is at work in it, helping it to set out anew every day on the way of love.

When the document finally describes a few important characteristics of the Christian family, again this happens with great attention to the contribution of children. This is already the case for the characteristic of ‘giving life’.

Parenthood is indeed a Christian call and responsibility. It is the experience of acting as God’s instruments in giving life to sons and daughters in various ways; but equally it is an experience of being formed by God through your children (439).

‘Growing in mutuality’ is another point of attention for each family, which usually involves a process of conversion for the adults.

There is a lesson to be learned from the way in which many cultures place children at the center of family life. Children in the family share equal dignity as persons with the adults. They too are part of the covenant of mutuality. Parents can demonstrate this by treating children with respect, giving them responsibilities, listening seriously to their thoughts and feelings. Bringing children into decision-making discussions, especially when the decisions could alter the pattern of family life, has precedent in our tradition. We read in the Rule of St. Benedict that the abbot is to consult with all members of the monastery, even the youngest (who often were children), when their lives were likely to be affected. Rather than undermining authority, this strengthens it in love (440).

This last quote brings me to a personal reflection. My wife and I experienced this ourselves during a crisis situation: a severe fire accident in our home. After having visited several houses where we could stay during the coming months, we decided to take our three children with us to make a final selection among the three best possibilities. The option which we as parents found most fitting was to accept the offer of the rector of the university to occupy a house in the Groot Begijnhof. After

our visit it became clear however that my two oldest children did not want to miss their schoolmates in the difficult months to come and, therefore, we accepted the second best solution which was located in the same town that we had lived in before. I believe that we made the right decision to involve our children in this important decision process.

### *Ecclesia in Africa*

In 1994 a special assembly of the Synod of Bishops was celebrated in Rome dealing with the evangelizing mission of the Church in Africa in light of the third millennium. This synod deserves special attention in my paper because the metaphor of Church as God's family was believed to be very meaningful for ecclesiological reflection in the African context. Not only did the Synod and the postsynodal exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* promote a more profound inculturation of the Christian faith, it also gave an example of this by developing a new ecclesiological model of Church as the family of God. This metaphor seems to be appropriate because it avoids "all ethnocentrism and excessive particularism, trying instead to encourage reconciliation and true communion between different ethnic groups" (63).

The exhortation deals quite a lot with the human family. In the second part of chapter two, a number of 'present-day problems of the Church in Africa' are discussed, one of which is 'marriage and vocations' (50). There we read:

A major challenge emphasized almost unanimously by the Episcopal Conferences of Africa in their replies to the *Lineamenta* concerned Christian marriage and family life (62). What is at stake is extremely serious: truly "the future of the world and of the Church passes through the family" (63).

In the second part of chapter four (80-85), Pope John Paul II focuses entirely on the family, especially because this theme had been brought forward in so many interventions by African bishops. No single reference to children, however, is to be found in this section, whereas the essential equality of men and women receive explicit attention.

In the next chapter, however, the Pope discusses the different agents of evangelization, starting with 'vital Christian communities', and then he moves to a discussion of 'the family' and 'young people'. The numbers dealing with the family mostly quote the well-known conciliar and papal statements and contain the traditional viewpoint that "parents are to see to the Christian education of their children" (92). In a separate subsection, the Pope insists that "young people should be called upon to become the evangelizers of their peers" (93).

Chapter six, 'Building the kingdom of God', repeats 'Some worrisome problems' of the Church in Africa, and here the Pope starts with 'Restoring hope to youth' before dealing with themes like AIDS, wars, refugees, the burden of the international debt, and the dignity of the African women. Once again, however, there is no attention to the specific contribution of children in the process of evangelization within the Christian family.

Very recently the *Lineamenta* for the second special assembly for Africa have been published, under the title *The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*. Chapter four deals with 'The Witness of a Church Reflecting the Light of Christ on the World'. In view of the structure of *Lumen Gentium*, it is remarkable that the chapter first focuses on 'The Church in Her Hierarchical Aspect and Witness to the World' before dealing with 'The Commitment of All the Faithful in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace'. Even if it should in general be deplored that the text extensively quotes from the first encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI but neglects the wisdom provided by African theologians, the section on 'The Identity and Mission of the Laity in the Church and the World' contains beautiful insights on the Church as family of God and on the human family – partially borrowed from *Deus caritas est*.

To understand better the current meaning and need for the laity's mission in the single mission of the Church, we have to return to the idea of the Church as a family, a place "where help is given and received, and at the same time, a place where people are also prepared to serve those who are in need of help"<sup>12</sup>. The family is a community of life in which there is a diversity of talents, charisms, ministries, functions, duties and services all of which contribute, each in its own way, to fulfilling the shared task. The Church is comprised of many members, but she is united; she is the Body of Christ, the People of God (61).

That children have an active role to play in the life of the Christian family is implied in this quote but has not been made explicit.

Luckily this has been the case in a number of contributions by individual African theologians which all have been published in the *African Ecclesial Review*<sup>13</sup>. In Benjamin Kiriswa's opinion the model of the

12. BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas est*, p. 32.

13. I especially rely on the contributions to a thematic issue in February 1996, 'A Call to Empower the Youth' (T.H. MBUYI, *The Need for Pastoral Care of Youth in Africa*, 2-10; M. CHRYSANTI, *The Cries of the Youth in Africa: Who Will Listen to Them?*, 11-25; A.K.A. CHEPKWONY, *The Youth: A Challenge to the Church in Africa Today*, 26-42; C.R. BANZIKIZA, *Juvenile Pregnancies: An Acute Problem in Africa Today*, 43-54 and G. MBOGO, *Pastoral Commitment to the Youth*, 55-58) and on B. KIRISWA, *African Model*

family – be it the nuclear or the extended family – must be thoroughly purified before it is applied to the Church. He reminds the reader that he “grew up in a family where children and women are literally considered as the property of the tribe, clan or men” (100). Even if children are regarded in most African societies as gifts and as a blessing from God, our author continues, “in spite of their importance, children are expected to play their role as children, namely to listen and obey their parents and remain under their protection until at such a time when they are able to be on their own” (103). The opinion of the author on the application of family relations to the Church is clear:

To transfer onto the Church the image of a family where the father is harsh, authoritarian and dictatorial, and the mother/wife is the slave who does all the donkey work, without any role in decision making, and the children have to be altogether silent, is to continue perpetuating a patriarchal, and dictatorial leadership in the Church (103-104).

Even if one of the contributors to the thematic issue of the *African Ecclesial Review* in an article entitled *A Call to Empower the Youth* seems to be aware that in family relationships “the old can learn from the young and vice versa” and that “a two-way traffic” is needed (24), it struck me that the majority of contributions still seems to uphold that the problem of the youth in Africa needs to be solved in a top-down manner. The paragraph titles insist that the youth must be prepared for future Church leadership, that they need models to emulate, that they require an effective animator, that parents and the Church play a crucial role in the lives of youth and that the youth need to be helped to live the Gospel message. The two-way traffic still seems to be missing in pastoral theological reflections on the youth by African theologians.

#### CONCLUSION

I believe it was worth analysing whether the most relevant Church documents dealing with the family as domestic church pay explicit attention to the active contribution of children in the life of Christian family. The Church documents seem to be aware, especially when speaking

*of Church as Family: Implications on Ministry & Leadership*, in *African Ecclesial Review* 43/3 (2001) 99-106. I could also have made use of the articles by K. OWAN, *African Marriage and Family Patterns: Towards Inculturative Evangelization*; L. CLERICI, *The Church as Family: African Church Communities as Families of Jesus and God: A Biblical and Ecclesiological Reflection*; and P. LWAMINDA, *The African Synod and the Family*, in *African Christian Studies* 11/3 (1995) 3-22, 27-45, 46-53.

about evangelization and education in the family, that the parents are also to be educated and formed by their children. With the exception of the pastoral letter of the American bishops, however, this has not been developed in great detail.

I find it remarkable that attention to this aspect is also quite absent in the recent publications on the domestic church which I have consulted, and even in the very valuable 2004 monograph by Florence Bourg, *Where Two or Three Are Gathered. Christian Families as Domestic Churches*. According to this theologian, there are no objective criteria which make it possible to determine which family truly meets the ideal of a domestic Church. In her opinion the reflections on the family by Pope John Paul II are of this idealistic type and constitute “theoretical pep talk” whereas the pastoral letter of the American bishops is much more realistic<sup>14</sup>.

Relying very heavily on the theology of grace and of sacraments of Karl Rahner<sup>15</sup>, the author of this important study is convinced that God’s presence can be experienced in the ordinary life of families. She very much insists that “ordinary, imperfect family life” has ecclesial value<sup>16</sup>. She mentions an example of her own life to indicate that it is not always easy to reconcile her own bodily and emotional needs with those of her children after a stressful working day<sup>17</sup>. At another place in her book the author explains that she had discovered the significance of Holy Thursday on the day – shortly before her doctoral defence – that she was unable to attend mass because her five year old son fell seriously ill.

But that night, while cleaning him up for what seemed like the hundredth time, I found myself washing his feet. And all of a sudden, it hit me – that was the Gospel message for the day. “If you do not wash each others’ feet, as I have washed your feet, you will have no share in my heritage” (John 13). Basically, you still don’t know what it means to be my disciple. After writing an entire dissertation on domestic church, you still don’t get the point about loving God by loving your neighbour! I began to cry, which is out of character for me. My attitude changed. My washing actions remained observably the same, but I saw them in an entirely different light<sup>18</sup>.

14. BOURG, *Where Two or Three are Gathered* (n. 1), pp. 54-56 and 63-66. See the important warning on p. 66: “When they are overly idealistic, inherited images of God and God’s human family can prompt some people to reject the symbol of domestic church as a source of discouragement rather than hope and growth”.

15. See especially chapters 9 on ‘Domestic Church and Sacramentality’ and 10 ‘Further Consideration of Domestic Church in Light of Sacramental Ecclesiology’, BOURG, *Where Two or Three are Gathered* (n. 1), pp. 93-121.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 51-68 (ch. 5).

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

It is clear in this example that our author was evangelized by the event of taking care of one of her children, but the main actor of the evangelization process seems to have been herself, because it was she who was able to relate the event to the Gospel message. The two examples in my opinion seem to have been written from the perspective of the adult, not from that of the children.

One section in her book deals with the question: “Is hierarchy a necessary feature of domestic churches?”<sup>19</sup>. Here, Bourq is able to indicate that there is a general consensus in magisterial teaching to defend the equality of relations between man and women and the communion between all family members. The author could have used this section, however, as an opportunity to focus more explicitly on the role of children. The same is true for the reference to *Evangelii nuntiandi* in her book. “We must not forget that adults can be evangelized by children, as noted by Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* §71. Proclamation need not entail drawn-out discussions of religion. There is overwhelming agreement that occasional, but sincere and consistent, words and actions that show awareness of God’s presence and concern for everyday life are just as effective”<sup>20</sup>.

Hopefully, in future monographs on the same theme, we will be able to find more constructive input on how children can become active subjects within the domestic church.

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19. *Ibid.*, pp. 84-86.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 107.