



## THEOLOGY CORNER

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*Theological Reflections by Paul Chutikorn - Director of  
Faith Formation*

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### “What is the Role of Parents in the Faith Education of Children?”

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This topic has been on my mind heavily the past couple of weeks as we begin to transition into a *whole* Family Formation for the 2021-2022 Religious Education year. In the previous model, parents dropped their children off for an hour-and-a-half of religious instruction, where a catechist would teach a short Catechism lesson on various topics of our faith. While this was a great way to get ahold of the children in our faith community and teach them about the tenets of our wonderful faith, there is an identifiable problem with this method — the disconnect between many parents and children in *living* this faith. As a result, the most common scenario is that a student comes to classes for the two required years in order to receive a sacrament, after which they will likely never return for any further instruction or faith formation. This is the pattern we are seeing, and the effect is certainly felt throughout the Church — especially in America.

In light of all of this and our new rollout of *A Family of Faith*, I want to take a few moments to address the following question: “Isn’t it the Church’s responsibility to teach my children about the faith?” The short answer is that it is the Church’s responsibility to play an *ancillary* role in the education of children, but the Church is *not* the primary teacher. A brief look at the Catechism on the requirements of conjugal (marital) love would show that “The fruitfulness of conjugal love extends to the fruits of the moral, spiritual, and supernatural life that parents hand on to their children by education. Parents are the principal and first educators of their children.” (CCC, 1653) The Catechism also states, quoting *Lumen Gentium*, “... parents are ‘by word and example’ the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children.” (CCC, 1656). In highlighting the basic nature of the domestic church, the Catechism also states that “...the home is the first school of Christian life and a school for human enrichment.” (CCC, 1657). The problem many parishes are experiencing all over America and beyond is that so many parents either do not understand this responsibility or have forgotten the utter importance of handing on the faith to their children in their homes.

The negative effects that we are experiencing in the Church today with so many children falling away from the faith after high school is due, in large part, to a weak domestic church. In the traditional model of parishes providing religious education, the students are learning the importance of living faithfully as Catholics, but many are seeing either the opposite or some watered down version of this in their homes. As a result, their interest in weekly Sunday education can begin to seem less important since what they are learning is not translating to action. To be clear, this is not to say that all parents are at fault. In most cases, it is because parents themselves lack an understanding of the faith as well as an understanding of how to go about transforming the home into a well-functioning domestic church. The new *Family of Faith* program offers a paradigm shift as it seeks to solve these problems through a model that is actually more traditional than the “traditional” model — it is how faith education was provided in the early Church. It is structured to emphasize the parents as the primary educators, while the parish will assist in preparing the parents monthly for this role while also providing an opportunity for a monthly community gathering where parents and children come together and interact with each other through fun activities that will foster an even greater faith community. This theoretically solves the problem of the disconnect between what is being taught and what is being done. This, of course, takes some more effort from parents. But the extra thirty minutes a day will change your life and the life of your children forever.

Is it worth it to you? If it is, please contact me ASAP to get registered for this amazing new journey our parish community is taking. Together, with the help of God’s grace, we can transform our lives in Christ and pave the way for a faith-filled future for our children who will then spread the good news to further generations proclaiming the Gospel that both saves and brings true peace to our lives, when lived with authenticity and love. I sincerely hope to see all of you in this program this year. **The first meeting is on September 5th at 10:45am in the Auditorium.**