

Learning Within the Christian Family

The Christian family is ordinarily the first experience of the Christian community and the primary environment for growth in faith. Because it is the “church of the home,”¹ the family provides a unique locus for catechesis. It is a place in which the word of God is received and from which it is extended. Within the Christian family, parents are the primary educators in the faith and “the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children.”² But all the members make up the family, and each can make a unique contribution to creating the basic environment in which a sense of God’s loving presence is awakened and faith in Jesus Christ is confessed, encouraged, and lived. Within

the Christian family, the members first begin to learn the basic prayers of the tradition and to form their consciences in light of the teachings of Christ and the Church. Family members learn more of the Christian life by observing each other’s strengths or weaknesses than by formal instruction. They learn intermittently rather than systematically, occasionally rather than in structured periods. Often extended family members take on a primary responsibility in transmitting the faith to the younger members. Their shared wisdom and experience often constitute a compelling Christian witness.

Notes:

1 *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 38.

2 *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11.