

The Role of the Liturgy in the Formation and Sustenance of Christian Cultural Memory in the family: An Impulse from early Christianity for the New Evangelization

Victor Usman Jamahk

Abstract

Memory; to remember is central, not only to the Christian religion but to the catholic tradition in general. Incidentally what it means “to remember” in the religious sense is often downplayed in our Christian journey today. The normal thing is to use the medium of memory to connect to events which define religious identity and form personality. This, however, is hardly the case. Rather participation in religious ceremonies and events are treated more as psychological, emotional or simply cerebral, having no bearing to the connection with the constitutive event in order to shape personality. A look at how early Christianity dealt with its religious memory shows that memory was not just psychological or emotive; it was formative and that the liturgy was at its center. Borrowing from Judaism, from which Christianity can never be separated, Christians recited scripture, passed on tradition and practiced the imitation of the virtuous and virtues in a way that influenced the formation of their personality. How we could learn from this is the focus here.

1. Introduction

The family as a unit of existence is under siege from various ideologies. These ideologies do not only attack the surface of the family unit, they attack its very foundation to the extent that what it means to be a family is gradually being lost to consciousness. It is like one who has forgotten his origins, disillusioned and confused he seeks to hold on to whatever comes his way – whatever he sees.

It becomes necessary, therefore, that one revisits the truths that constitute one's origins and this is where religious memory comes in. One has to call to mind those religious truths, those values, those events which constitute personality and shape identity. It is only recourse to such elements that

could inoculate one from the aberrations taking place and bring one back to the awareness of the ultimate truth of self. While the family constitutes a basic unit where the memory that gives identity and shapes personality is transmitted, the liturgy is the most pertinent medium through which the family itself is nurtured in order that the family can nurture itself. What the role of the liturgy is in the transmission of memory-the values that shape personality, is our concern here. To do this, we shall be looking at how the early Church dealt with the transmission of memory through the liturgy and the family in order to draw up some points of action for ourselves in the here and now.

2. The role of memory in religion and human existence: How religion works

In recent studies, the role of memory in religion has been brought to the fore, even for theological studies. The very recent studies of O'Collins and Braithwaite (2015) on "Tradition as Collective Memory: A theological Task to be tackled" is an evidence of this. What has precipitated this is not entirely agreed upon by scholars but I dare to say that it is the prevalent loss of religious consciousness that has, remotely, prompted this cause. What constitutes religious truth seems, by each passing day, to tend towards being submerged in the secularism and secularization that is taking place so that one seems to suffer some amnesia regarding what actually constitutes the truths of one's religion. The studies, however, have shown that there is no religion devoid of social or cultural memory. In fact, memory is said to be the driving force of religion. While religion exists in order to preserve memory, memory is sustained in order to preserve religion. A deficiency in any of the tenets would lead to some malfunction.

The reason for this is not far-fetched. At the basis of all religious traditions, is the quest to connect to certain events of paramount importance. These events are the ones that are embodied in people's beliefs giving them religious identity and influencing their religious personality. In a broad sense, the event are usually either historical as with the so called 'historic religions', such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam, or, they may be mythical, as in some of the 'primal religions'. An example is the Passover Event for the Jews. The association of the adherent of any religion with the events of this origin is what gives him/her identity; if it is deficient, formation will also be deficient. Therefore, how these events are impressed on them and sustained in them defines a lot.

2.1 Static Memory and Dynamic Memory

Now, historians of memory theory generally recognize its evolution from an essentially static view to a more dynamic view. Aristotle (384-322B.C.E.), Augustine (C.E. 353-430) and George Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel (1770-1831) represent the static view. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) represent the dynamic view. The major difference between the static and dynamic views of memory, is this: while the static just draws on events of the past for past sake; the dynamic draws on events of the past for the sake of the present and the future. In the dynamic, one remembers for the sake of its function now! Christian memory falls under the dynamic aspect.

2.2 Collective “Cultural” Memory and Collective “Communicative” Memory

Assmann (1991) has written very convincingly about how dynamic memory works. He does this by differentiating between collective *cultural memory* which goes back to the origins of peoples and helps constitute their personal as well as collective identity and collective *communicative memory* which serves the transient moment and immediate existence. While cultural memory goes back to the origins regardless of time, communicative memory is ephemeral and does not last beyond 50 to 100 years because it is used only for contemporaneous existence and dealings. According to him cultural memory is normally reproduced over generations and constitutes the identity of the group and individuals in it. According to him, cultural memory is like the immune system of the group and it functions just like a biological immune system through circulation in order to keep one from being lost in routine and ephemeral things. In this system are sayings, creeds and rites as well as rituals which are there in order to hold the immune system of the group together by giving the participants of a rite a share in the knowledge relevant for the sustenance of their identity (Assmann, 1991). The rites are the places where people are reminded of who they really are and what their real identity is. In other words, it was through the rites and rituals within the confines of what Assmann calls the “Feast-time” being some special ceremony that the cultural memory was to be transmitted and sustained.

3. Understanding the transmission of Christian Cultural Memory

3.1 The transmission of Memory in Judaism, A pre-cursor to Christianity

How the Jews transmitted their cultural memory has a lot to offer to the

understanding of how Christianity transmits its cultural memory and what the contents of cultural memory is. Jews generally see memory and the art of remembering as a religious imperative. Its reverberations are everywhere in the Jewish scripture but they reach a crescendo in the Deuteronomic history and in the prophets. For example, “Remember the days of old, consider the years of ages past” (Deut 32:7). “Remember these things, O Jacob, for you, O Israel, are my servant; I have fashioned you, you are my servant; O Israel, never forget Me” (Is. 44:21). “Remember what Amalek did to you” (Deut 25:17) emphasize how one is not to forget where one is coming from and what constitutes one's history. However, it is not just the injunction “to remember” that is our interest here but also how to remember. The religious imperative of remembering or to remember was and is still concretized in religious practices: They were to remember basically, through ritual and recital-in simple terms and through constant participation in the liturgy of Israel.

3.1.1 The *pesach* as the heart of Jewish memory

The principal object of memory in the Jewish tradition is the exodus event which is a wonderful event in the life of the people of Israel that constitutes them into the people of YHWH-in other words, their origin is canonized in the feast of *pesach* where the freedom from slavery in Egypt was to be remembered through some ritual reenactment and staging. (Ex 12:14; Deut 16:1-8) Through this ritual reenactment all the generations of Israel were to be brought into this age-old event which served to constitute and define their identity. The import of Deut 6: 20-25 in this type of remembering is considered as axiomatic; not only are the tenses in the indicative, they are also in the present:

21 then you shall say to your son, `We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt; and the LORD brought *us* out of Egypt with a mighty hand; 22 and the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before *our* eyes; 23 and he brought *us* out from there, that he might bring *us* in and give *us* the land which he swore to give to our fathers. 24 And the LORD commanded *us* to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for *our* good always, that he might preserve *us* alive, as at this day.

The Mishnah to *pesach* (mPes X 5) even makes it more direct when it says that from generation to generation everyone is obliged to see himself as being led out of Egypt (Messner, 2009).

3.1.2 The content of *pesach*

It is also particularly interesting to note what is being remembered during the *pesach* and how. During the liturgy, everyone was to re-enter into the suffering of their fathers in Egypt, they were to identify with it in order to come out with them from slavery. On the part of what constitutes *pesach*, it is not only the crossing of the red sea that is remembered; it is also not only the day that the Lord spared the first born sons of Israel; it is the whole history of the forming of the people of YHWH and their relationship with him as it is recorded in the *Tanakh* that constitutes the contents of the celebration. The import of the Palestinian *Targum* (TargumNeophyti) to the text of Ex 12:42 has demonstrated how the *pesach* constitutes an anamnesis of the entire salvation's history of the Jews from creation to the *parousia*. The history is divided into four distinctive nights: the first is the night of creation, where God created heaven and earth; the second is the night where God made a pact with Abraham through the sacrifice of Isaac; the third is the night where God freed Israel from slavery in Egypt and the fourth the night when God will bring the world to its end through the coming of the Messiah (Messner, 2009).

As we have said before, the act of remembering – the liturgy of Israel – was not only to be facilitated through ritual but also through recitations. In fact, there is a giving that after the destruction of the temple and in the absence of opportunities to participate in sacrificial rituals, the requirement that doctrine be continually rehearsed, taught and learned may have served a compensatory function. Verbalization of memory and recitation of law were held to be not merely equal to sacrifice, but insofar as they reinforced the knowledge of God and obedience to his commandments, more desirable in terms of the covenantal status of Israel (Cf. Hosea 6:6, I Sam 15:22, Prov 21:3). One participates, therefore, in the covenant by verbalizing and teaching its terms and all future audiences of the text, are equally incorporated in the covenant through the act of verbalizing.

3.1.3 The role of Jewish families in the retention of memory

The recitations, although mostly communal, had their cradles in the homes or families. In fact, there is a giving that after the destruction of the temple, more of the work had to be done by families. As such, one cannot think of liturgy for Judaism without thinking of the families. Examples are Ex 12:24, 26-27; “Then you shall say to your son...” Deut 6:21; “Drill them into your children” and Deut 6:7. Deut. 31:13 also talks about reading the law to the

children, “who do not know it, that they too must hear it and learn it, that they too may fear the Lord”. It was to be told to them and they were to learn to participate in the liturgy in order that their identity is clear and their personality is formed.

3.2. Christian Cultural Memory

3.2.1 The paschal mystery (Pascha-Mysterium) as the basis of Christian cultural memory

Contrary to what many think, Christian worship also works upon such an index of memory and the basis of Christian cultural memory is what has been designated as the paschal mystery; in Latin, *Pascha-Mysterium*. It was, therefore not coincidental, that John the Evangelist writes his account of the crucifixion of Jesus in such a way that the death of Jesus coincides with the time around when the paschal lambs were slaughtered in the temple in Jerusalem(cf. Jn 19:14). In early Christian literature, it was made obvious that Christ is the true and final paschal lamb which brings eternal salvation. John the Evangelist demonstrates this by reproducing the passage of Ex 12:46 in Jn 19:36 in which it is stated as it was with Jesus as against the other two thieves with whom he was crucified, that “none of his bones shall be broken”. And St. Paul will state later “For our Paschal lamb Christ has been crucified” (1 Cor 5:7). The point is that there was a typological reception by Christianity of some major elements from the Jewish Passover. In fact, Messner (2009) is of the opinion that this statement from Paul represents a Christian Oral tradition about Christ as the paschal lamb which was already prevalent in the first century. The Easter Sermon of Meletio of Sardis in the second century lays more credence to this (Figura, 2010)

3.2.2 The Contents of the paschal mystery

The fact that Jesus Christ becomes the true lamb which takes away the sins of the world is not the only motive that was to be taken from the Jewish liturgy; as early enough, the motive of *pascha* as the summary of the history of salvation was also adopted. Contrary to what most people think, therefore, the paschal mystery that Christianity celebrates in her liturgy is not just the passion, death and resurrection of Christ but the entire salvation history from creation up until the time of the *parousia* with Christ at its center. How this paschal mystery is transmitted is the main business of the liturgy and there is nowhere else that this is demonstrated as aptly as in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 5 (Henceforth SC). In fact, it was the first time that the technical term was used in the Vatican II documents. According to it,

The wonderful works of God among the people of the Old Testament were but a prelude to the work of Christ the Lord in redeeming mankind and giving perfect glory to God. He achieved His task *principally by the paschal mystery of His blessed passion, resurrection from the dead, and the glorious ascension*, whereby "dying, he destroyed our death and, rising, he restored our life"(no. 5)

What constitutes "Paschal Mystery" (Pascha Mysterium) is aptly demonstrated here. Not only does the paragraph begin with a recount of *the wonderful works of God among the people of the Old Testament*, the wonderful works are christened as a prelude to the work of Christ the Lord in redeeming mankind which Christ achieved *principally* by the paschal mystery of his in his blessed passion, resurrection from the dead and glorious ascension. In his commentary on the article, Vagaggini (1965, p. 63) interpretes the *paschamysterium*, simply as *sacramentum* or *mysterium* as "The events of Christ's Life, the things he did and suffered, even his whole Person...". Note that the events of Christ's life, the things he did and his whole person are also included here. The paschal mystery is not about the end-phase of Christ's life alone; *Pascha mysterium* also contains the life of Christ, that is, what he taught by his life! It is not limited to the death and resurrection of Christ as people would want to have it be so that they are not bothered by contemplating the events of his life – His teaching – but to gain from the events of His passion and resurrection. Haeussling (1999, p. 164) is, therefore, not far from the truth when he writes that *paschamysterium* as it is used in Vatican II documents is a "short form" (Kurzformel) of the self-revelation of God in the history of salvation. This occurs further in SC 6, 47, 61, 81, 102 and 111. It also occurs in GS 22 and 53, *Optatamtotius* 8 and in *Unitatis Reditegratio* 11.

3.2.3 Passing on the Christian Memory in the Liturgy aided by Private Devotions

There is no other place where the paschal mystery comes to life like in the liturgy. In fact, the whole of the liturgy, including the Liturgical Year and the sacraments is a continuation of the paschal mystery. It is the entirety of the paschal mystery that is to be transmitted not just a part of it. All the indices are to be portrayed: the life of Christ, what he taught by it and during it, his passion, his death, his resurrection, his ascension and the anticipation of his second coming which is why the unfolding of the liturgical year with the intelligent distribution of the various accents must be respected. It is,

therefore, not only the resurrection that is needed for the formation of the people, it is also not just the suffering and passion that is needed; it is a composite of all in the right measure. Christ actually came, not just to save us like that, but to save us by forming us and the liturgy is the continuation of this formation. SC demonstrates this when it teaches that the liturgy is “*quasi continuatio ipsius personae et operis Christi*” – a continuation of the person and the works of Christ (Boff, 1972, p. 10). It does not just continue the saving work of Christ “just like that”, it continues the saving work of Christ by building up daily those who are within into a holy temple of the Lord, into a dwelling place for God in the Spirit, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ and this is done through the reproduction of memory. However, in SC 12 it is also demonstrated that spiritual life is not limited solely to participation in the liturgy which means that Christian memory is nurtured and sustained, not just by liturgical participation or prayer but also through private devotions. But how does all this work?

3.2.4 How anamnesis works-baptism and the art of remembering

For one to remember, there has to be some substance to be called to mind, otherwise, that which has to be remembered which is where baptism comes in. As SC 6 says, through baptism, one is initiated into the life in the *paschamysterium* of Christ and brings a very important dimension to the fore about the sacrament of baptism which, somehow, seems to have become obscure by the nonchalance with which the practice of infant baptism is handled; the fact that baptism is also a sacrament of faith. The faith that we are talking about is not just something cerebral and dormant but active faith demonstrated in the *dictum* that, “Old things pass away and everything is new” (2 Cor 5:17s). One necessarily has to be “schooled” into the faith one is to receive. This is the meaning of calling baptism a “sacrament of initiation”, initiation into a new way of viewing life and existence which is simply called *paschamysterium*. In essence, the *paschamysterium* now constitutes one's cultural memory. One is to be defined no longer by the standards of the world or worldly human culture but by the standard of the *paschamysterium* and remembering the tenets of this *paschamysterium* is the life-long task that we enter into when we are baptized.

3.2.4.1 How anamnesis works – baptism and the art of remembering – An input from the early Church

One just needs to go through the conditions as laid down in the Apostolic Tradition for becoming a Christian to see what is meant (Dix, 1968; Bradshaw, 2002). Apart from the fact that it had to be ascertained if the

persons concerned have the right intentions for joining, there was a long list of professions given which were incompatible with being a Christian. Very noteworthy is the injunction that it should be enquired into whether those who want to join are able to hear the Word. Apart from the Latin version which does not record this part of the constitution, the other versions: the Sahidic, Arabic and Ethiopic versions all observe that it was paramount to know whether the new comers are able to hear or to listen. The Witness given by the Canons of Hippolytus 10 shows that the concern about this "hearing" or "listening" was actually a concern for the ability of the converts to accept and submit themselves to a new way of thought and action according to Scripture. "He is to be instructed in the Scriptures so that he may renounce Satan and all his service." This is also attested to in chapter 17 when it is decreed that the three years' duration stipulated for the training in the catechumenate is not necessarily sacrosanct but could be reduced where the catechumen shows a good acceptance of the Word. "Let the catechumens hear the Word for three years. But if one is earnest and perseveres well in the work, the time is never judged, but the character only is that to be judged". Hearing was to be seen in action! (Bradshaw, 82, 96; Dix: 23, 28)

According to Jungmann (1976, p. 7), the three year period of the Catechumenate, then, apart from being a period of special instructions, was a period of moral trial, a sort of novitiate with religious and ascetical exercises. The aim was not just to get "another convert" but rather to give the persons concerned the tools for being Christian. The tools were not to be inculcated through learning by teaching; they were to be acquired through practice; in other words, learning by doing! It was to lead to a transformation of the mind to enable one view existence in a new and different way-the adoption of a new culture and as St. Paul would say, "Be transformed through the renewing of the mind"! As a Christian is *in* the world, he must use the collective communicative memory but because he is not *of* the world he uses the Christian collective cultural memory. This was probably why the final examination before baptism was not about knowledge acquired but an examination of conduct to ascertain whether One's conduct corresponded with Christian ideals. Jungmann (1976, p. 76) further observes that "...The Church maintained the stern standpoint of a decisive either-or. She did not want mere half-Christians; she preferred to remain small in numbers rather than to be unfaithful to her principles, or to endanger them."

3.2.4.2 Liturgy, anamnesis, the family and the transmission of Christian cultural memory

The communal liturgy both in Jewish and Christian tradition has always been the principal means of transmitting memory. We have seen, however, that with the Jews, especially after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, the family liturgy became the principal medium of transmission. It is transmitted in two ways which go hand-in-hand: creedal recitals and ritual.

In the Christian memory, rather than have time for recitals as in Judaism, time was made-from the very beginnings-for private devotions and there was no difference between these devotions and recitals because the content of these devotions also served as instruction for the faithful. Although there may be no clear-cut definitions regarding this, the pointers are that the family was an important medium of transmission. As early as the *Didache* we read in 8:2-3, "Do not pray like the hypocrites..." with an injunction that the Lord's Prayer be said by all, "Three times a day" (Holmes, 2007, pp. 355-356). This was not to be done in a communal assemble but in private. In the following centuries, it was generally agreed that the three times of prayer were the "third", "sixth" and "ninth" hours. This is actually where our canonical hours of the Terce, Sext and None have their origin; in other words, private devotion turn liturgical prayer! This is very important.

The Apostolic Tradition furnishes us with something of the content of the prayers at these times. In fact, not only so, it demonstrates to us that these prayers were purposefully aimed at maintaining Christian memory! This was to be done in two ways: liturgical (community) memory and private devotional memory.

In the liturgical sense, we hear the Apostolic Tradition decree concerning the hour when it is proper to pray, "And if there is any instruction by word, let him give preference to this so that he hurries and hears the Word of God for the comfort of his soul. Let him hasten to the church, where the spirit flourishes" (Bradshaw, 2002, p. 178).

The idea of the "flourishing of the spirit" from the liturgy was resplendent in the lives of the Christian to the extent that they, despite their being the minority, were able to transform pagan society. How did this happen? The liturgy transformed them and they transformed the society. The spirit

flourished through the fact that the liturgy exercised its function as teacher. The Communal liturgy taught the people and the people passed it on. Jungmann(1976) reports of how the liturgy at the time was resplendent with the reading of Holy Scripture and how what he calls, "The Lesson" occupied a prominent role in liturgical ceremonies: Sunday Mass, Vespers and Lauds at least. By this, the people gained extensive knowledge of Scripture through the homilies which were not an interpretation of the literal sense of Scripture but the typical, figurative sense. Through such method of preaching, Christians were able to apply Scripture to themselves in a most profound manner. Moreover, the responsorial nature and the participatory nature of liturgical prayer served to imprint the dictates of the religion in their hearts. Remember that this was a major requirement for baptism; that one is able to listen! As such, although there were no written ecclesiastical laws which made attendance of Sunday ceremonies obligatory for a long time, the martyrs of Abitinia during the persecution of Diocletian declared, "Sine Dominico (esse) non possumus" - "Without the Sunday Mass we cannot live". Law was truly in the heart!

But that was not the only means of maintaining memory; the Christian, as in 2 Cor 4:10, was also to "Carry the cross of Christ around in his body" and never depart from God's presence. Chapter 36:1 of the Apostolic Tradition states that the faithful on the day when there is no instruction should do some spiritual reading. The injunction for what constituted Terce, Sext and None, which as we have said were private prayers, is quite instructive with regard to the memory that we are talking about. Terce, which was either to be prayed at home (one could not exclude the family here!) or "in the heart", was to be used to think of Christ being nailed to the cross. At the Sext, they were to "pray a prevailing prayer likening themselves to the cry of Him who prayed and caused all creation to be made dark for the unbelieving Jews." (Dix, 63) At noon, they were to remember Christ who at the hour was pierced with a lance shedding blood and water! As is obvious from the description, then, the prayer itself was not so much vocal prayer but rather mental prayer; some kind of maintaining connection with the identity constituting origins. What the Jews achieved through recitals was achieved by Christians through private devotion! They were to feast on a daily ration of healthy spiritual food. These were not just prayer formulas spoken by the lips; not merely prayers of petition outlining one's own personal needs and wants; but rather meditative prayer, thoughts of faith and fundamental concepts of the Christian religion. As the Apostolic Tradition states in the

closing paragraphs: “These things, therefore all ye faithful, if ye perform them and remember them and instruct one another and encourage the catechumens to do them ye will not be able to be tempted or to perish, having Christ always before your minds” (Dix, 68).

How such a spirit could be restored is pivotal to achieving the new evangelization that has been talked about because evangelization is character formation and character formation cannot be achieved without memory.

3.3 Transmission of Christian cultural memory in our times

Although many ecclesiastical documents since *Mediator Dei* have made it clear that the liturgy is the source of the Christian spirit, it would seem that this Christian spirit is in decline. So much has been done in order to bring the liturgy to the faithful but it seems that the more this is done, the farther the core of Christian memory is from the faithful. Benedict XVI (2003, p. 213) has identified that most of the problems that we have today with the misunderstanding of the liturgy as a medium of transmitting the cultural memory stems from a misunderstanding of what the paschal mystery is and stands for. It would seem, he says, that attention has been placed so much only on the externals and the “practical” all giving vent to the danger that one loses grip on the core of the matter which is the internal. And there is probably nowhere else that this is as pervasive as in Nigeria. The simple reason for this difficulty is the loss of truth; the lack of truth; a perversion of what the paschal mystery is and what it entails with regard to the demands of the new way of life that we should lead after initiation – the new culture that all the baptized must imbibe. What the liturgy should do is to form Christians towards the actualization of this way of life especially through baptism and participation in the sacrifice of the Mass and also in the other sacraments.

However, what we see is the watering-down and distortion of the liturgy and its sense of the paschal mystery through the prosperity gospel which we preach such that it nurtures the families wrongly and the families also nurture the children wrongly. Most times, emphasis is only on one index of the paschal mystery – the resurrection – such that the salvation which Christ won for us is taught to be easy. There are families which pray together but because they do not contemplate the entire indices of the paschal mystery to the point that it leads to the formation of the children in Christian values and culture of hard work, sacrifice and honesty, they grow

up believing also that life is all about Easter Sunday forgetting the entire life of Christ, his teachings, his passion and his death all of which demonstrate the truth that life is in stages and that sowing comes before reaping which is why it would not be bad to learn from the early church.

It was not just by what they believed that the early Christians were able to change the pagan society; it was by what they were. In fact one became Christian not by name but by deed which was why the period of the catechumenate of some catechumen could be shortened if it was observed that they had imbibed the “New way”. Christianity must lead to the formation of Christian personality and character rather than the throwing up of baptized Christians here and there who have not been Christianized.

The liturgy that pastors celebrate must form Christians in the truth rather than be twisted to tell them the lies that they want to be told. This begins with the faithfulness to the spirit of the liturgical calendar as it has been bequeathed to us. I was in a church in this recently passed season of Lent where instruments were used with impunity and dancing done with reckless abandon all in the name of “The African Spirit” and I wondered if the African spirit is superior to the human spirit—the truths of the human life which Lent is meant to draw us into. More and more, people want to be drawn away from the rigors of reflecting about their lives and we continue to construct liturgies and modify the liturgy to suit this avoidant behavior. And our dispensation of the sacraments from baptism down to Matrimony also follows this pattern. How then will the liturgy exercise its function as teacher and what will parents teach their children when most of what they are given is half-backed?

If there is anywhere that this kind of aberration occurs in the liturgy it is in our homilies. Almost all scripture passages are twisted to exhort people to prosperity rather than form them to Christian and human maturity. We exhort and exhort without knowing that when you exhort one who is not formed you drive him to an absolutization of his lack of formation. Formation comes before exhortation and that is what it has always been. The liturgy is an avenue for formation first and if it is an avenue for exhortation it is only because exhortation aids formation. Our preaching should become *anamnetic* and not just didactic or paracletic. It is didactic when it teaches and paracletic when it lays out the principles for a good Christian living but it becomes *anamnetic* where the history of Christ—the human being *par excellence*—is made the history of every Christian.

4. Conclusion

In more recent times, the Church has emphasized the role of the family in maintaining Christian memory. For example, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* of Vatican II not only states in number 11 that the family is the domestic Church, it goes further to state in 35 that where the Christian religion pervades the whole life of the family with a continuous and ever more profound transformation, the married partners have their own vocation, that is, being witnesses of faith and the love of Christ to one another and to their children. The Declaration on Christian Education *Gravissimum Educationis* would restate this in number 3 that parents have the obligation of educating their children. They are to create a family atmosphere of love and devotion to God and their fellow men. Moreover the *Lineamenta* of the XIV Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family in 2014 would state in number 59,

One of the fundamental challenges facing families today is undoubtedly that of raising children, made all the more difficult and complex by today's cultural reality and the great influence of the media. Consideration, then, needs to be given to the needs and expectations of families, capable of being places of growth in daily life, places of a concrete and essential transmission of the virtues that give form to our existence.

My take in all these is this, if the liturgy would be returned to its role as teacher, if it is celebrated with the truth of all the facets of the paschal mystery in mind, the families would be nourished and they in-turn would nourish their children.

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