

Making the Role of Parents More Effective in the Religious Formation of Children: A Study of Canon 226 §2 from Nigerian Perspective

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Abstract

The article is titled, "Making the Role of Parents more effective in the Religious Formation of Children: A Study of Canon 226 §2 from Nigerian Perspective." The effective formation of children in the Church has become suspect, evident in the prevalence of ignorance amongst them. Over time, parents have considerably abdicated their role in the formation of children, leading to several of them being unable to display their Christian roles. The traditional means of formation in the Church have become inappropriate and ineffective. This has been the subject of several statements by the Church's authority and scholars. The Second Vatican Council recommends some authentic and effective ways for formation of children. The aim of this article is to explore the possible role of parents in bringing about the insightful formation of children in the family ambience. For this reason, the Council refers to the Christian family as "domestic Church." It explores important parental roles to educate and form their children as good Christians as contained in several sections of the Code of Canon Law. It importantly considers a juridical framework for incorporating the catechetical role of Christian parents in the parish catechetical schedule, particularly in the process of the Christian Initiation of Young Adults.

1.0 Introduction

The Church experiences, in contemporary times, the challenge of the inadequate formation of her members. This is particularly obvious in the challenges that confront traditional catechetical methods in the formation of children in schools and parish centres. The results are obvious ignorance about the Christian faith among the faithful, the inability to pray properly or to lead other people in prayers, inadequate knowledge of the scriptures, and inadequate participation of the Christian faithful in the Church's' several activities, including liturgical worship. These often result in lukewarm attitude towards religious activities, the non-performance of assignments that are due to them as members of various apostolate groups, the flirtatious attitude of some faithful who hoop around different Church denominations, and finally, the complete abandonment of the Catholic Church for other denominations

particularly when they attain youthful age and enter tertiary institutions. The adolescent challenges of their young children sometimes confound Christian parents as they suddenly begin to frequent and adopt other Church denominations, as they grow older and attain higher level of independence. This happens despite the catechetical formation going on in the parishes, the activities of various lay apostolate groups, and the Church school programmes. These are signs of a missing link in the catechetical formation programme of the church. The parish and the catholic school systems cannot singularly undertake the catechetical formation of Christian children alone. Catholic Christian parents have significant roles to play in the comprehensive realization of the Christian formation of their children. The challenges minimize by evolving more appropriate structures and methods of catechetical formation that should take pragmatic juridical cognisance of the role of parents participating in the catechetical formation of their children through effective utilization of the families as the domestic sanctuaries of the Church.

Majority of parents have failed in this area of apostolate and this has resulted in the collapse of several Christian families as active Christians cells of the Church. Most parents who have abdicated their Christian responsibilities when the children are still very young and vulnerable are often surprised when, from adolescence, these children abandon their catholic faith for any other one that soothes their fancy. Some parents are not very conscious of the seriousness of their obligation to educate and form their children. Canon law and the general teachings of the Church oblige parish priests and their assistants to take family welfare very seriously in their apostolate and plan very diligently the strategies for doing this (Diane, pp. 294-295).

The Second Vatican Council recommended the basic religious formation of children by Christian parents in their homes, as an integral part of normal family life. While adequate canonical frameworks should evolve to make catechetical formation more effective, it should be acknowledged that not enough attention has been taken to bring the catechetical role of Christian parents into parochial relevance in the catechetical formation of their own children. This paper therefore intends to examine the provisions for the role of parents in the catechetical formation of children in the light of can. 226 §2 and related canons, how this should be understood in the light of the provisions of the magisterium and particularly how this role could enhance catechetical formation of children generally in the parishes. The researcher proposes a juridical framework in the particular Churches that aims to factor into perspective the catechetical formation of children by parents into the overall catechetical preparation of children for the reception of the sacraments before leaving their homes. In this way, Christian parents experience challenges in the performance of their role as the religious educators of their children, as a matter

of the normal way of continuously witnessing to the Gospel message, in their homes.

2.0 Clarification of Essential Ideas

2.1 *Parent or Parents:*

A parent is someone who begets or brings forth offspring. Henry C. Black defines parent as:

“The lawful father or mother of a person. One who procreates, begets, or brings forth offspring. By statute, 'parent' has been defined to include 1) either the natural father or the natural mother of a child born of their valid marriage to each other, if no subsequent judicial decree has divested one or both of them of their statutory co-guardianship as created by their marriage; 2) either the adoptive father or the adoptive mother of a child jointly adopted by them, if no subsequent judicial decree has divested one or both of them of their statutory co-guardianship as created by the adoption; 3) the natural mother of an illegitimate child, if her position as sole guardian of such a child has not been divested by a subsequent judicial decree; 4) a child's putative blood parent who has expressly acknowledged paternity and contributed meaningfully to the child's support; 5) any individual or agency whose status as guardian of the person of the child has been established by judicial decree.” (Black, p. 579).

In this article, parents include not only biological parents but also legal or foster parents and guardians. There is always an intimate bond between parents and their children. This enables parents to impact relevant values to their children through education and formation.

2.2 *Child or Children:*

The word “children,” on the other hand, is the plural for child. Black's Dictionary defines it as: “Progeny; offspring of parentage, unborn or recently born human being. At common law one who had not attained the age of fourteen years, though the meaning now varies in different statutes; e.g. child labour, support, criminal, etc. statutes. The term 'child' or 'children' may include or apply to: adopted, after-born, or illegitimate child; step-child; child by second or former marriage; issue” (Black, p. 124). Chambers Dictionary refers to children as young persons who could be up to the age of sixteen years in the civil sense. In the Church a person who has attained eighteen years of age is said to have reached maturity and has the full use of his or her rights (cc. 97 & 98), while below that age a person is regarded as a minor. A minor, before completing the seventh year of age, is an infant and not considered responsible for his or her

actions. One who has completed the seventh year of age is regarded as a minor who has attained the use of reason (c. 97). A minor remains subject to the authority of parents or guardians in the exercise of rights. There are some minors that are exempted from this authority either by divine or canon law (c. 98 §). A child at the age of seven receives the sacraments of baptism and even confirmation through the process of the Rite of the Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) because they have attained the age of reason. Parents have the responsibility for the education and religious formation of children in their family environments (Ojemen 2016, pp. 239-242).

2.3 Christian Religious Formation:

In this article, Christian religious formation refers to the means and processes of inculcating Christian religious doctrines and values in children. Although this is usually done in multiple institutions, this article is limiting itself to the role of parents in their family environments. Parents fulfil their responsibilities to their children through the creation of enabling environment in the family and by teaching the children by their good examples. When parents bring their children for baptism, priests remind them of their responsibility to give regular and proper religious education to their children: “You have asked to have your children baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring them up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbour. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?” (*The Rite of Baptism for Children*, 109). Then, before the renunciation of sin and the profession of faith, the celebrant of the baptism speaks to the parents and godparents reminding them of their religious obligations to their children: “On your part, you must make it your constant care to bring them up in the practice of the faith. See that the divine life, which God gives them is kept safe from the poison of sin, to grow always stronger in their hearts” (120). The Church considers the family as the most basic and fundamental school for the education and religious formation of children and sees parents as their primary educators and formators.

3.0 Parental Right and Obligation to Educate their Children - Canon 226 §2

Canon Law directs the lay faithful to be painstaking and diligent in dealing with issues of marriage and parenting which are the most important elements in family affairs. Can. 226 §2 states:

Because they gave life to their children, parents have the most serious obligation and the right to educate them. It is therefore primarily the responsibility of Christian parents to ensure the Christian education of their children in accordance with the teaching of the church (*Apostolicam Actuositatem* 11; *Gaudium et Spes* 52).

Canon 226 has two paragraphs. The first paragraph emphasises the sacramental institution of marriage and the duties attendant to Christian families as an integral part of their vocation. The second paragraph lays emphasis on the moral ends of marriage. This includes the right and the obligation of Christian parents to give appropriate religious education to their children in accordance with the teaching of the Church. This canon has the underlining doctrinal principles of making the Catholic family a “domestic Church,” a “primary vital cell” and a “domestic sanctuary” of the Church, where the Christian way of life is initiated, nurtured, sustained and lived. It is therefore, expectedly, a place for holistic family education, a place for moral and spiritual formation, a place for ongoing sanctification and a place for raising Christian children for the Church. In this situation, Christian parents play leading roles in the catechetical formation of children by the religious actions they initiate in the family as well as by their exemplary lifestyle.

The first essential point raised in the canon emphasises the primary catechetical right and responsibility of parents to their children that emanates from the fact that they beget their children. This point is well emphasized by Javier Hervada (p. 181): “The end of procreation has not only the natural dimension of conserving and increasing the human race, but also that of providing the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, with new members and augmenting the number of the chosen. The education of the children includes their education in the faith, for which the parents have primary responsibility”.

A second issue raised in this provision is the affirmation of the primary responsibility of parents to ensure the Christian education formation of their children, particularly in the family ambience. This does not indicate that only parents can educate or form their children. The provision of the canon did not reserve the first or principal place of the educational rights over their children to parents although it does affirm that they are the primary educators. The implication here is that while parents are the primary educators and formators of their children, other persons can play some very important roles. What is primary about the role of parents in the education and catechetical formation of their children is that they have the right to determine the manner in which this is done (Diane, p. 294). Moreover, there are some parts of this formation where only through them can the children be educated and formed through the Christian atmosphere and values that the family promote and project.

A third element present in the provision of the canon is that the Christian values to be promoted and taught the children in the family should be in agreement with the teaching of the Church. How do parents ensure conformity with the doctrine of the Church? This can only be easily possible when the parents are actively committed and involved in the Christian activities of their parishes.

Thus, they would be involved with the formation programmes initiated by their pastors and receive in their Church activities. This also means that the pastor should be committed to the ongoing Christian formation of Christian couples (c. 529).

4.0 Parental Obligations to Form their Children in Related Canons

There are related canons that pinpoint the rights and obligations of parents in the education and Christian religious formation of their children. Some of them include canons 774, 793, 795, 797-8, 851, 855, 867, 868, 890, 914 and 1366. The author gives greater consideration to these canons below.

4.1 Parental education of children by good example:

The provision in canon 774 §2, reminds parents of their responsibility of forming their children both in faith and in Christian living. They are particularly reminded to do this through the actual building up of their family situations and the examples of their own living (*Lumen Gentium*, 11, 53; *Gravissimum Educationis*, 3, 6-8; *Gaudium et Spes*, 48). Pope Benedict XVI, in *Africae Munus*, presented the family as the best setting for learning and applying the culture of forgiveness, peace and reconciliation (43). He observes that a healthy family ambient would normally help children to experience care, peace, justice and love among the members of the family as the parents play their role. For these reasons, he supports the constant teaching of the Church that the family is the first and indispensable teacher of peace. He considers the educational mission of the Christian family through the Gospel messages, transmitted and radiated through a school of following Christ, and an itinerary of faith and Christian initiation. The Christian family therefore is a place where members evangelize and are evangelized (46)

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that Christian parents are duty bound to carefully devote great attention to bring up their children and provide for their physical and spiritual needs, as well as educate them in the right use of their reason and freedom. It provides that parents obtain the responsibility and privilege to evangelize their children through the grace of the sacrament of matrimony. Consequently, they should initiate their children at an early age into the mysteries of the faith and associate them with the life of the Church (2225). The family therefore is the place for the formation of children in the ways of God: growth in holiness, moral life, being taught on how to pray and discover their vocation as children of God, growing in the faith by the witness of a Christian life. The family ambient therefore provides serenity for instilling family catechesis that encourages profound Christian life from infancy, the most appropriate time, for learning and retaining enduring values. The Catechism teaches that even the children contribute, in their own way, to the growth of holiness in the family by the exhibition of the virtues of forgiveness in

moments of quarrels, injustices and neglect, and by joining the parents in the promotion of peace and reconciliation (2221-2224).

4.2 Parents to Determine the Educational Institutions for their Children:

Canon 793 emphasises the obligation of Christian parents to educate their children but also their right to choose the means and institutes in their local circumstances that can best promote the good education of their children. The canon emphasizes that parents should avail themselves of the assistance of the civil society necessary to provide catholic education for their children (*Gravissimum Educationis* 3 and 6). Most Nigerian parents who train their children in private schools still undertake this task without any assistance from any tier of Governments. There is a problem of social injustice involved here which parents have the obligation to join hands to mount pressure on civil governments to reconcile.

4.3 Parental responsibility to send children to Catholic Schools:

Canon 798 reminds parents of their right to send their children to schools that would cater for the Catholic education of their children. Catholic schools would expectedly provide the children with serious catechetical formation that would enable them to learn Christian doctrines and help them to live true Christian lives (*Gravissimum Educationis*, 8 and *Catechesi Tradendae*, 18).

4.4 Parental Catechetical Assistance to their Children Regarding the Sacraments and Christian Life:

Parents have responsibility to their children with regard to the preparation and reception of the sacraments and Christian living in their homes. Canon law pinpoints the parental roles in the area of preparing their children for the worthy reception of the sacraments such as baptism (cc. 851 2^o, 855, 867 & 868) confirmation (c. 890) and the Holy Eucharist (c. 914). The children need to be prepared for the sacraments at the appropriate time (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 64, 67; *Lumen Gentium*, 14, *Christus Dominus* 14 and *Ad Gentes Divinitus* 14). In *Ecclesia in Africa*, the Pope presents the family, the domestic Church, as the community which believes and evangelizes, a community in dialogue with God, a community generously open to the service of humanity and where the parents occupy a prominent place in the Christian education of their children. While calling on the Christian family to be a powerful nucleus of Christian witness, he also called dioceses to develop a programme for the family apostolate as part of their overall pastoral plan. He expects that the Church in Africa would develop a domestic Church that builds on the solid cultural pillars and noble values of the African tradition of the family and therefore become a privileged place for evangelical witness (92).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* adopts a systematic presentation of the Church's teaching on the role of parents in the education and catechetical

formation of their children. The first teaching holds that the family home “is the natural environment for initiating a human being into solidarity and communal responsibility” (2224). It is the place where parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, and other members of the family interact and where children experience and learn tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity and cultivate disinterested service (2221-2223). It is the place they are educated in virtues and the subordination to legitimate authorities. This is where they cultivate family affection, Christian spiritual and moral cultures and values. This formation comes indirectly and sometimes directly through the Christian discipline of their parents and their exemplary witness of life (Ojemen 2015, pp. 505-509).

4.5 Parental Cooperation with the Pastors on Family Catechesis:

There is a very urgent and serious need for parental cooperation with their pastors for the catechetical formation of their children, not only in the parish centre but also in the family ambience (cc. 890 and 914). Raising children for the reception of the sacraments is the responsibility of both the parents and the pastor of their parishes by way of proper catechetical instructions undertaken in the family and in the parish. Canon 914, places the age for preparation for the sacraments on the attainment of the age of reason, which is at seven years (c. 97 §2). It expects parents and pastors to cooperate in this noble work. The nature of this collaboration needs to be properly defined and clearly determined. The parents and pastors have their different times and places to come in and play their part.

4.6 Penalty for Parents who baptize or educate their Children in Non-Catholic Churches:

Canon 1366, prescribes a censure or other just penalty, for parents or guardians or foster parents, who hand over their children to be baptized or educated in a non-Catholic religion (Paul VI, *Matrimonium Mixta* 15). This provision is important. It emphasises the resolve of the Church to ensure that parents or guardians play more responsible roles in the religious formation of their children and wards and that this is done according to the mind of the Church. The local circumstances of the parents would determine the nature and weight of the penalties and who should be penalized (Green, pp. 1577-1578).

It is obvious from can. 226 §2 and the related canons elucidated on above, that the Church is not in short supply of canonical provisions regarding parental obligations in the education and Christian religious formation of their children. What this writer would further consider in this paper is how these provisions are implemented in the living context of the Church in Nigerian, the examination of the challenges to the realization of the parental obligation, and then to proffer recommendations to ensure the implementation of the provisions referred to above.

5.0 The Challenges of Catechetical Formation in the Christian Homes

Are parents actually performing their roles as primary religious formators of their children? Can they liberally make the choices required of them in determining where to educate and form their children? The Nigerian scenario is that more children are not receiving all the catechetical formation they require to become good Christians, whether in their homes or in the parishes. Several Catholic children are not actually receiving that primary formation they ought to receive from their parents. Consequently, there is prevalence of ignorance about the Catholic doctrine among Catholic youths and adults. The reasons for this are multiple and we shall examine some of them now.

5.1 *The Non-Availability of parents for the upbringing and formation of their children:*

The religious and catechetical responsibilities that God and the Church assign to Christian parents over their children, requires that they make themselves available at home for their children. This is not often the case in contemporary Nigeria as several parents work outside the home or are engaged in other social enterprises, leaving their children without adequate care. When parents are not available in their homes, the requisite Christian family atmosphere necessary for the moulding of the children will most probably not be present. Most parents are more prepared to give money to their children than they are ready to be available to help them.

5.2 *Ignorance of Christian Doctrine among Parents:*

The ignorance prevalent among several Catholic laity about their faith affects the fulfilment of parental responsibilities with regard to the religious formation of their children. There have been recurring complains about the yawning ignorance suffered by several Catholics about their faith (Ojemen 2010, pp. 108-109). This ignorance is the result of inadequate catechetical formation of most Christian parents who are therefore unable to impart meaningful religious values on their children. In fact, some Christian parents are unable to lead people in prayer. In such family homes, prayers are not common features just as there are rarely Christian instructions.

5.3 *Lack of Parental Commitment to the Realization of the Responsibilities of the "Domestic Church":*

One of the serious problems in parental fulfilment of their responsibilities to the formation of their children is the lack of seriousness on the part of many of them. Some parents simply do not show much commitment to Christian life and prayers. They are committed to all other things but prayers, evangelisation or the building up of Christian family values.

5.4 *Tendency to Over Rely on Other Institutions for the Formation of their Children:*

It is easy to use money to get places for their children in schools and some social institutions. They also leave the religious formation of their children to the parish pastor or the lay catechists. In this situation, the role of the family in the education and religious formation of the children is almost completely undermined.

5.5 *Parental use of House Helpers for the Raising and Formation of Children:*

Most Christian parents relegate their formative roles of their children to other parties such as house helpers, schools, churches and other social or educational institutions.

5.6 *The education of children in distant and oftentimes non-Catholic institutions:*

The education of children far away from their homes has advantages and disadvantages. Some children leave home when they are still very young and this removes them from the formational control of their parents. The education of children in distant institutions is a serious problem in sustaining the primary role of parents. It also dislocates the continuity of the catechetical formation of children particularly when they are preparing for Christian initiation.

5.7 *The Disruptive Influence of the New Social Media:*

There is no doubt that the new social media has several veritable goods that it can offer both in the Church and in the society as a whole. It is very popular among youths, who always make profuse use of them for recreation, studies and researches and for some sort of wealth creation. However, no one can afford to overlook the growing disruptive influence of this media, particularly in the sphere of religious and moral upbringing. The social media comes up with wide range of information, some of which are morally corrupt.

5.8 *Limitations in the Provision of Catholic Schools:*

The first limitation has to do with their non-availability. Several dioceses do not have their own private schools. Some dioceses and parishes have only a few that are inadequate to meet the number of catholic children that would require them. Very importantly, several catholic schools are too expensive since the government does not subsidize private schools in anyway. Parents, therefore, have limited options regarding where to send their children for studies with some guarantee of worthy Christian formation.

6. Juridical Framework for Upgrading the Catechetical Role of Christian Parents

There are multiple provisions to encourage parents to perform their Christian roles in providing for the religious formation of their children and wards. In some cases, parents are to collaborate with pastors in their parishes in the religious formation of their children, preparatory to the reception of the sacraments of Christian initiation and the other sacraments. It is obvious in the last section that there are several hindrances militating against parents in the performance of their roles of imparting religious formation to their children. We wish to suggest some juridical and pastoral recommendations to enhance the performance of parental responsibilities to their children in matters of religious formation.

6.1 *Guidelines by the Conference of Bishops:*

Canon 851, 1^o provides that The Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults be adapted by the Bishops' Conference in a manner that suits local circumstances. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria in preparing this guideline should seriously consider the role of parents in the religious formation of children in the families. The Bishops' Conference can help in preparing some material that would promote the role of parents to their children. Such tools should include the following: a handbook of Family Catechism, Guidelines on Family Prayers, and Guidelines on Shared Biblical Studies in the Family.

6.2 *Introduction of Particular Norms to Regulate Christian Formation in the Families:*

There is urgent need to introduce particular norms to provide special status to parents in the catechetical formation of children in preparation for the reception of the sacraments, particularly those of Christian initiation. The Code of Canon Law has provisions asking parochial pastors to play serious supporting roles in ongoing formation of Christian spouses and parents (*Christus Dominus*, 30 & *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 6). This writer submits that particular norms should be made that would give pride of place to parents as the primary religious formators of their children. Christian parents should be challenged to play more leading roles in the catechetical and religious formation of children. The yardstick to encourage and stimulate the ongoing training of their children is to incorporate the religious work of parents in the framework of parochial catechetical programmes.

6.3 *The Incorporation of Christian Parents in Parochial Catechetical Schedule:*

There should be deliberate efforts made to bring Christian parents into the scheme of the catechetical formation programme of the parish for the Rite of the Christian Initiation of Adults or of children who have attained the use of reason

(cc. 97-98). The specific role of parents should be determined in the particular Churches in the instructions issued by the local ordinary (c. 134). In this way, parents, catholic schools and parishes play their identified roles in preparing the children for the sacraments of Christian initiation. Before admitting these children to the programme of the Rite of Christian Initiation at the parish level they should firstly, be tested by the pastor or his delegate. During such tests, parents who have diligently performed well by adequately catechising their children would join in the success and joy of their children and wards when admitted to the programme. The children are given the opportunity to join the other children in the parish, to prepare for the remaining parts of catechetical formation, when they pass the required test, set for all the children. The implication of such particular Instruction is multiple for both the parents and the children. In this way, the pastor integrates both the parents and their children into the parish's catechetical programme midway and not exactly from the beginning. In this way, children who are unable to follow fully the programme in the parish receive help through their family's catechetical activities at home.

6.4 Practical Steps to Implement Christian Families as “Domestic Churches”:

What the last point implies essentially is that the building up of the domestic church, talked about during the Vatican Council (*Lumen Gentium*, 11 and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 11), and in post Conciliar magisterial documents (*Christifideles Laici*, 62, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 92 and *Africae Munus*, 46) should become a reality in Christian families and parishes. With the adequate formation of the miniature Church of the parish in Christian homes, parents would be better equipped to perform their roles. When catechetical responsibilities are entrusted to parents in the process of the RCIA and catechetical formation programme for their children, parents become more committed and collaborative with their pastors. By becoming catechists to their children in the home, parents can take charge of some roles presently performed by catechists in the parishes. Thus, they would be better prepared to educate and catechise their children. They would know more about Christian doctrines and moral values. This would impart very well on their capacity to engage in building up their families as the vital Christian cell of the Church and the domestic sanctuary of the Church (Ojemen 2015, pp. 505-510). The children would learn from the life examples of their parents without difficulties in a serene atmosphere that lives and promotes Christian doctrines and values through love, social justice, mutual respect, mutual forgiveness, family prayers, and the sharing of the Bible message. Finally, the parochial pastor and the lay catechists also benefit as their direct work of the religious formation of children reduces by the fraction performed by the parents. As such, the pastor is able to perform his duty of more adequately forming the spouses (c. 529§1).

6.5 *Empowerment of Parents for the Ongoing Religious Formation of their Children:*

The ongoing Christian formation of children in their families implies that parents are equally given commensurate Christian formation that would enable them fulfil their responsibility of raising the religious standard of their families. Parochial pastors are enjoined “to ensure that spouses and parents are sustained in the fulfilment of their proper duties, and to foster the growth of Christian life in the family” (c. 529 §1). It is important to find out if particular Churches have worked out canonical or pastoral frameworks for the implementation of these directives. How is the pastor fulfilling his duty of forming Christian parents towards performing their Christian family obligations? In what ways are Christian parents being formed to know how best to undertake their duty of religious and catechetical formation of their children? It is a well-known fact that most Catholic parents are ignorant of the Christian family obligations.

6.6 *Encouragement of Parental Initiatives to Provide More Private Schools:*

It is obvious that the government alone cannot sufficiently provide all the educational schools and facilities for the education and formation of children in any country. Thus, private individuals, including parents and corporations have the right and the responsibility to provide academic institutions and facilities that would enable parental choice on where to educate their children (cf. c. 797 and 798). This would mean the availability of more schools for parents to choose from and send their children. Catholic schools should also be available in sufficient number and the fees should be moderate to enable catholic parents have real choice. To achieve all these parents and proprietors of schools should join hands to prevail on national, state and local governments to make educational provision for all children who are citizens and not only for those in government schools. The choice of schools for their children would be difficult to make if the institutions are not available in sufficient number and if the cost is exorbitant.

6.7 *Promotion of Parental Availability and Accessibility:*

Availability of parents to their children is a very important component in human formation. The challenge faced in the formation of children in contemporary times is that parents are rarely present at home for their children. This is more so with regard to the fathers while in some homes both parents abandon their children to housemaids. Some family psychologists opine that parental availability and deeper relationship with children foster effective parenting. Shammi Sukh says:

Availability on the part of parents gives children a strong sense of worth, creating in them a feeling of being wanted. It communicates to

children a powerful message about how important they are to their parents. The sense of worthiness generated in children by the feeling of 'being wanted' is very vital for their psychological and all-round development. On the other hand, the "I do not matter to anybody" feeling generated by a sense of being unwanted as a result of regular and long absence on the part of parents has been known to have grave repercussions in terms of the child's personality and emotional maturity (19).

Unless parents are available to their children it becomes difficult to impart those Christian and cultural values that they can only internalize. When parents are available and accessible to their children, greater social communication would advance in the family. The parents would also find it easier to educate their children to develop the sense of personal responsibility, easier for the child's potential to blossom, cultivate a sense of discipline through praise instead of punishment, cultivate a sense of justice and equality among people, and cultivate a sense of respect for others and unconditional loving relationships with people. It is in this environment that enduring Christian doctrines and values are imparted, that children are taught to pray, to lead in prayers, to acquire the skill of active participation with other people in Church affairs.

7.0 Conclusion

The actual relevance of the provision of canon 226 §2 and related canons regarding the role of parents in more relevant Christian upbringing of their children, can best be felt when they are actually helped to do their work through appropriate particular legislations. As several parents are busy about so many other things, the religious formation of their children suffers. It turns out that several of them are unable to take up the responsibility of building up their families as "domestic sanctuary of the Church." It would be imperative to translate this wonderful principle of the "Christian family as a domestic church" into a living reality for the good of the children, the parents themselves and the parish Church as a whole. The incorporation of the parental efforts in the religious formation of their children to the similar efforts in the Catholic schools and parishes would turn out to be helpful. This would awake in everyone the sense of their catechetical responsibilities as they would be more committed to this vocation as Christian parents. Thus, pastors and lay catechists would be able to do their work more diligently and the parents would be able to perform their work better. The anchor of this would be their renewed consciousness that it is important for the advancement of their children and for building the domestic church. The end result is that children benefit more intimately from the religious catechesis of their parents for their good, the good of the family and the good of the society at large.

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