

ance (TMHS 18-19, 55). The formation of these virtues is furthered by the testimony of the parents' behavior and presenting them to children in a positive way, motivated by the Christian spirit (cf. Mt 5:1-12).

Sex education in the family is a gradual process.²⁷⁹ The Pontifical Council for the Family enumerates four stages in man's development and in sex education: childhood – "the years of innocence" –, adolescence, young adulthood, and maturity (see TMHS 77-111). The Council also defines the specific tasks of sex education at individual stages. The depth and the detail of this subject do not allow us to include it in our study. There are, however, detailed studies that the interested readers may consult.²⁸⁰

5. The Family as the Place of Moral Education

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The responsorial character of morality is based on the fact that man was created in Christ "for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life" (Eph 2:10). This means that man is invited to give God an answer that flows from faith through his moral life. The Christian moral life of both the parents and the children must flow out of faith and cannot be fully developed without it. The encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* recalls that moral education should firstly help people to recognize and fulfill the call received from God (EV 92). For this reason, both parents' must cultivate their own moral development and ensure that their children's moral education is a response to God's call. Pope Francis links the fulfillment of the parents' vocation with their educational mission, because "in educating them, they build up the Church" (AL 85).

Education leads the person towards his or her full development in Christian perfection (see GE 2) and growth to personal maturity. Moral education

al mondo la "buona Novella" sulla purezza del cuore e trasmettete il messaggio della civiltà dell'amore, Sandomierz (12.06.1999)," in: IGP t. XXII, 1:1999, 1313-7.

²⁷⁹ EGH 15, 41, 48; cf. TMHS 64-65, 75, 77, 94, 124-5.

²⁸⁰ Cf. H. Joyeux, *op. cit.*; K. Meissner, *Skąd się biorą dzieci? Jak rozmawiać z dziećmi o przekazywaniu życia*, Poznań, 1999; K. Wiśniewska-Roszkowska, *Wychowanie seksualne*, Wrocław, 1998; J. Goleń, *Wychowanie seksualne w rodzinie. Studium pastoralne*, 127-44.

eminently serves the purpose of Christian education. It aims at the moral development of boys and girls, including in the cognitive sphere so that they may recognize what is good and what is bad; in the emotional sphere, through the development of moral sensitivity; in their behavior, leading them to behave and act well.²⁸¹ Moral education is also referred to as ethical education, character training, and education to values.²⁸²

The family based on marriage shares in the saving effects of Christ's mystery and is a natural setting of life in faith (cf. FC 15). Spouses, united by the sacrament of marriage, are witnesses of salvation for one another and for their children (FC 13). The parents' educational mission has a religious character because the sacrament of marriage obliges the spouses to give their children a Christian upbringing. Parents, thus, share the power and love of God and the Church. Enriched with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, they can help their children in their human and Christian growth (FC 38). Vatican II's Declaration on Christian education stresses the role of the Christian family, enriched by the grace and power of the sacrament of marriage, in bringing the children, from an early age on, teaching them to worship Him and to love their neighbor (cf. GE 3).

Faith in Christ implies and bears with it Christian values that influence the moral attitudes of parents and children (cf. PSM 26). Therefore, the family, as a domestic Church, is a school of richer humanity, especially in the spiritual and moral dimension.²⁸³ It is in a home of faith and prayer that children come to know God's goodness and love and accept the truths of the faith and morals (see FC 59-61). For this reason, the Church recognizes the family as the main setting of moral education. Together with God's grace, certain conditions should be met in the Christian family so that its moral teaching may be effective in the interaction with the surroundings, helping the young to accept and internalize the values and principles of Christian morality. The extent to which the family accepts its own role in moral education is important, just as are the presence of important factors of moral education, attention to pedagogical conditions, and the use of tried-and-tested methods of moral education in the family.

The Family's Role in Moral Education

The family's educational role in has a solid biblical and theological foundation. It suffices to recall the Vatican II's statement that because parents have

²⁸¹ Cf. M. Łobocki, *Wychowanie moralne w zarysie*, Krakow, 2008, 12-3.

²⁸² Cf. J. Kamiński, "Wychowanie moralne w rodzinie," in: *Rodzina jako Kościół domowy*, 410.

²⁸³ GS 52; TMHS 48.

brought their children into the world they must be recognized as the primary educators of their offspring (cf. GE 3). Pope John Paul II reminded parents that their duty to educate their children is connected with the transmission of life itself. He underscored that this is a fundamental priority, in which they are irreplaceable, and that it is an inalienable duty, which cannot be completely delegated and that other cannot take over (FC 36). Pope Francis emphasized this “most serious duty” of parents and their “primary right,” that they are called to defend and that no one should try to take away from them (AL 84).

Yet, despite the force of the parents’ natural right to educate their children and strong psychological and pedagogical arguments indicating the positive influence of parents and of the immediate family on human development,²⁸⁴ the family is facing strong opposition in this area. There are opinions suggesting that both the mother and the father can be successfully replaced in education by “alternative educational entities”. There are voices appealing for the family’s withdrawal before unequivocal axiological influences pretending that they will make it possible for children to choose life goals and values with full freedom later in life. At the same time, the family is in danger of letting threats penetrate into the home instead of stressing its educational assets.²⁸⁵

The number of parents who unsatisfactorily fulfill their educational function represents an even greater challenge. Various external factors contribute to this and, among these, a key factor is the low level of parents’ educational awareness, which also leads many parents to try to put the burden of their own responsibility for raising the children on different institutions.²⁸⁶ Sometimes, for the same reason, the important mental and spiritual needs of family members are treated with skepticism or completely ignored, in the family and its milieu, that exempts working on oneself (where “at last, one does not have to make an effort”).²⁸⁷ Parents whose educational awareness is insufficiently developed may have difficulty accepting and playing their own role in their children’s upbringing. In the area of education, in which the demands are put on parents, they have particular difficulty accepting their role in the children’s moral upbringing.

In spite of external and internal difficulties, the family’s acceptance of its own role in moral education is one of the key educational factors on which the accomplishment it depends. Moral education in the family setting takes

²⁸⁴ K. Olbrycht, “Wychowanie do wartości w rodzinie,” in: J. Wilk (ed.), *W służbie dziecku*, vol. 2, Lublin, 2003, 48–9.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

²⁸⁶ Cf. J. Kamiński, “Wychowanie moralne w rodzinie,” 409.

²⁸⁷ K. Olbrycht, “Wychowanie do wartości w rodzinie,” in: J. Wilk (ed.), *W służbie dziecku*, vol. 2, 54.

place both through natural socialization and acculturation as well as through intentional actions of the parents.²⁸⁸ Their action can take three forms: information and providing knowledge about morality; forming emotions, experiences, and evaluations; and showing specific behavior patterns.

On the basis of their own system of values and knowledge, parents give their children specific moral instruction. They do this by deliberately providing knowledge that allows children to acquire a body of content and concepts that they will need in the future to shape their personal moral consciousness. This knowledge should not be composed merely of a set of theoretical principles but also include value terms such as "good – bad," "fair – wicked," "allowed – prohibited." Such unambiguously formulated moral content has legible signposts that guide a child's behavior in life.

Emotions, experiences, and evaluations are formed by means of a system of rewards and punishments, orders and prohibitions. This system helps the children learn how to do good and avoid morally bad behaviors. Parents, who show their own feelings and emotions in different life situations, teach their children how to react, perceive, and evaluate specific forms of behavior. In this way, a child's moral sensitivity is shaped.

On the other hand, specific behavior patterns shown by the parents provide children with specific forms of behavior in life situations and allows them to shape their attitude with regard to certain types of conduct.²⁸⁹ The above-mentioned educational actions of parents, over time, significantly affect the formation of the child's conscience, which in the future will determine the whole of his or her moral life.²⁹⁰ However, the following educational factors also play an important role in its formation.

Essential Factors of Moral Education in the Family

The presence of several important factors determines the extent to which the family is the setting of moral education and plays its role in the children's moral upbringing. These factors include the atmosphere in the family, the parents' example, dialogue with children, and the presence of religious signs.

The family's atmosphere is the main conditioning factor of moral education. Although it is possible to distinguish a number of its components, it

²⁸⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 49.

²⁸⁹ J. Kamiński, "Wychowanie moralne w rodzinie," 414–5.

²⁹⁰ See M. Rusiecki, "Uwarunkowania kształtowania się sumienia dziecka," in: J. Wilk (ed.), *W służbie dziecku*, vol. 3, Lublin, 2003, 7–29.

seems that the most important of them is the parents' marital bond that constitutes the family and affects how the family system functions.²⁹¹ It is thought that the spouses' mutual relationship constitutes, alongside the mother and the father, the so-called third educational factor. The parents' bond of love positively affects and protects the good emotional development of the children (TMHS 50). The parent's love is perceived by a child as "the source of one's life and the solid foundation of the family" (AL 172).

Together with the conjugal union, the family atmosphere is also marked by parental love. Pope Francis states that the father and the mother are collaborators of the love of God the Creator and its interpreters. Indeed, "Every child has a right to receive love from a mother and a father; both are necessary for a child's integral and harmonious development" (AL 172). The love for the children orients all the educational activities from the conception on through the subsequent years of a child's life. It manifests itself in tenderness, stability, goodness, attentiveness, selflessness, and sacrifice (FC 36). In the light of teaching the Holy See, children who experience a climate of love in the family are better prepared to live in accordance with the moral truths as their parents. The awareness that their parents love them inspires their confidence in them and stimulates them to love in the highest degree.²⁹² Pope Francis adds that love forms the soul and cultivates freedom (AL 172). Teachers confirm that the climate in a family's home created by love and mutual trust between parents and children is the best foundation that parents can lay to help a child to acquire amorally mature personality.²⁹³

In the moral education of children, the parents' example plays an important part. According to the *Educational Guidelines* of the Congregation for Catholic Education, "Christian parents must know that their example represents the most valid contribution in the education of their children" (EGHL 50). The good example of parents teaches children not certain moral values but also let them experience these values in the parents' lives. The children observe and imitate their behavior; learning from their openness to the needs of others and their concrete gestures of love, they adopt their way of assessing and evaluating. Consequently, parents should constantly work on their own moral development so that they maybe models that their children can imitate and with which they can identify.²⁹⁴ Furthermore, the

²⁹¹ Cf. M. Braun-Gałkowska, *Psychologiczna analiza systemów rodzinnych osób zadowolonych i niezadowolonych z małżeństwa*, 144–51.

²⁹² TMHS 52; FC 18, 63–64.

²⁹³ Cf. K. Olbrycht, "Wychowanie do wartości w rodzinie," in: *W służbie dziecku*, vol. 3, 53.

²⁹⁴ Cf. J. Kamiński, "Wychowanie moralne w rodzinie," 416.

good example of parents heightens their authority and makes the children accept their parents' teaching and instructions as reliable. In fact, dominated by the mass media, Catholic parents are required to be vigilant in their use and so avoid jeopardizing the integrity of the home, and they themselves use the media with moderation, discernment, and prudence. They should not exempt themselves from educational concern for children and adolescents use of mass media but protect them against its spreading aggression and corruption (cf. FC 76, TMHS 56).

An important educational factor that complements the parents' example is their personal dialogue with children regarding moral values and behavior. According to the Pontifical Council for the Family, "Parents must find time to be with their children and take time to talk with them" (TMHS 51), taking into account the child's age and stage of development (EGHL 49). Conversations with parents play an important role not only in showing values, reasons, and patterns of behavior but also orient the children's emotional and affective growth. Hence, they can significantly affect their specific decisions, choices, and behaviors. The condition for successful dialoguing is to conduct it in a friendly way, without preaching or imposing one's views on the children and adolescents. Parents should first be able to listen carefully and try to understand their children. This means that they must devote time to their children, really "being there for them," and lovingly put themselves on their level (TMHS 51).

Christian moral education is connected with religious upbringing, which provides deep motives for moral behavior. Morality based on religious values encourages good actions and avoiding evil, not only for natural but also for supernatural reasons. The supernatural reasons of moral behavior appear when parents show their children that human life and behavior as ways of realizing the love of God and neighbor (see Mk 12:29–31) and striving towards Christian perfection and holiness.²⁹⁵ Combining human and supernatural motifs makes it possible to show children a certain line of conduct (cf. TMHS 51). Hence, a Catholic family that lives in accordance with the Decalogue and the Gospel is the best setting for moral education.²⁹⁶ Parents who pray and read the Word of God with their children and introduce them into Church spiritually give birth to them (cf. FC 39). In this way, Catholic parents, living out the faith, penetrate deep into the hearts of children and leave traces there that events later in life will not be able to erase (FC 60, TMHS 63).

²⁹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

The Pedagogical Conditions of Moral Development in the Family

The fundamental experience of moral education is, as has already been said, the children's experience of the spouses' mutual and parental love. Being surrounded by love leads children to trust their parents and to the conviction that they are trustworthy and truthful. The experience of truly being cared for and important to their parents, even if they are not perfect, lessens the pain and makes the path towards maturity easier (cf. AL 263). Christian parents open their children and inspire them to adopt moral norms and principles first by showing them God's closeness and goodness through maternal and paternal respect towards them. This awakens in children a predisposition of trust towards people, the surrounding world, and God.²⁹⁷ It leaves a decisive mark on their entire further religious and moral life. At that moment, children experience an irreplaceable religious awakening (GDC 225) that provides the basis for moral education. Unfortunately, this principle also works in the opposite direction. The Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* points out that "Ethical formation is at times frowned upon, due to experiences of neglect, disappointment, lack of affection or poor models of parenting. Ethical values are associated with negative images of parental figures or the shortcomings of adults" (AL 272).

Pope Francis emphasizes that the parents' task in the field of moral education is to form the will and develop good habits as well as the emotional inclination to goodness. Growth is reinforced on the basis of the behaviors and inclinations that appear and their patient formation towards greater perfection and fullness. A good disposition for the pursuit of higher values is the desire to fit into society or the ability to renounce immediate satisfaction to adjust to a certain norm and ensure harmonious common life (cf. AL 264). The moral formation can advantageously be furthered through inductive dialogue that allows the children to perceive the meaning of certain values, principles, and norms, rather than imposing them as indisputable truths. Thanks to this approach, children can discover the good that they can do and recognize that good actions are beneficial for them (AL 264-265).

The will is further strengthened through habits acquired in childhood. They play a positive role, helping to ensure that the acquired values are translated into healthy and permanent external behaviors. Then, the repetition of positive behavior develops and forms the faculty of volition (virtue) and moral behavior (AL 266). The formation of one's own moral force respects

²⁹⁷ See J. Wilk, *Znaczenie pierwszych doświadczeń dla religijnego wychowania małego dziecka w rodzinie*, Lublin, 1987, 239-257.

human dignity and consists in the exercise of freedom in actions guided by the conscious, free choice, and inner emotions. This is accomplished “through ideas, incentives, practical applications, stimuli, rewards, examples, models, symbols, reflections, encouragement, dialogue and a constant rethinking of our way of doing things.” The formed competence is an internal and stable principle of action (AL 267).

Use of Methods in Moral Education

The family’s educational setting intervenes both unintentionally and intentionally. In addition to the parents’ good example of moral behavior, as part of the intended intervention, it is helpful to use proven methods of moral education, including accustoming children and adolescents to moral behaviors, familiarizing them with specific knowledge about moral life, encouraging moral self-education, developing self-governance, and the method of “moral reasoning”.²⁹⁸

Moral behavior is instilled by entrusting children and adolescents with specific tasks that give them the occasion to perform good deeds. This teaching method serves both individuals or groups. Upbringing in the family presents many opportunities for this type of tasks. It is important to assure that these tasks correspond to possibilities of the young and are associated with a positive incentive so that the services may be freely rendered. A proven form of training moral behavior is the involvement of children and adolescents in voluntary movements, active participation in peer groups and associations promoting healthy, pro-social behavior.

They can be taught about human moral life above all verbally, by providing them with information that may influence their moral awareness. This intervention should help the children to interiorize what they have been taught. When using this method, it is important for parents and the educators in the family to act in accordance with their moral teaching. Otherwise, the children, noticing the contradiction between the declared values and how their parents and educators behave, may acquire attitudes characterized by moral relativism and hypocrisy.

Encouraging moral self-education is the natural prolongation of the parent’s educational influence. Education is intended to form young people to develop on their own (LtF 16). Effective encouragement to be responsible for one’s own moral development is the highpoint of the parent’s teaching in the

²⁹⁸ J. Kamiński, “Wychowanie moralne w rodzinie,” 411.

family. This encouragement bears its fruit when young people consciously assume this responsibility.

The method of developing self-governance consists in giving children and adolescents the possibility to participate in decisions about a variety of matters. This is favored by the fact that the young remain in close contact with the adults while being tactfully guided by them, especially in difficult and morally doubtful situations. The advantage of this method is that it permits exploring expected behaviors and moral attitudes as well as assuming moral responsibility for the deeds committed.

The method of “moral reasoning” is recommended for older children and adolescents. It consists in discussing or conversing about various moral problems. Then, the young can analyze moral norms and values more deeply and to justify them with rational arguments. There is also a shared search for solutions, determining the consequences of these solutions for the person concerned by the problem, and identifying hidden values in the problem being considered and showing values from a higher level of moral development.²⁹⁹

The family is a setting of moral education. Christian moral education is fostered by the atmosphere in a family that believes and lives the faith. The following factors are favorable: the climate of love, a good example, dialogue, the transmission of information, the presence of religious images, and the skillful formation of the will. In addition to these factors, it is beneficial to use proven educational methods, especially those that prepare for self-education. In addition, children are encouraged to live a good life by their parents’ prayer and using God’s grace received in the sacrament of penance and the Eucharist.

6. The Family as the Place of Education for Love and Family Life

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The goal of education is the person’s realization, helping him or her to reach human and Christian maturity and to discover his or her vocation (cf. TMHS 22). Man, created by God for love, is also called to love. God has

²⁹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 411–2.