

Session 2: Parents as Primary Educators

Proposition Definition: Form and inspire parents to understand and fulfill their responsibility as the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith.

- Provide groups for parents to encounter Jesus, be formed in the faith, and support one another in their responsibility to pass on the faith and help their children grow in holiness.
- Equip parents with age-appropriate dynamic resources to share with their children. (Topics include Bible stories, scripture, and the lives of the saints.)
- Encourage faith formation catechists and Catholic school teachers to see themselves as co-workers with parents.
- Provide accompaniment to young parents, showing them how to integrate Catholic culture in daily family life.

The following are already underway in the implementation plans for Year 3: Parents as Primary Educators:

- A Blue Ribbon Commission was named and established in summer 2023. It included a group of highly qualified lay educators, formators, and clergy who met regularly throughout the next year, tasked with crafting proposals on how to approach this initiative.
- Recognizing this work is a true culture shift, the Blue Ribbon Commission encouraged a phased approach to implementation when presenting to the archbishop and vicars in fall 2024.
- As such, a pastoral letter will be released this summer (2025) addressing specific plans for the start of the Year 3 initiative. Simultaneously, “Reclaiming the Lord’s Day” will serve as a “soft start.” In 2026, other proposals from the Blue Ribbon Commission will be rolled out.

Other Key Points:

- This proposition was the top vote-getter in the 2022 Synod Assembly. It was one of the four propositions Archbishop Hebda listed in his pastoral letter.
- The Baptismal Rite speaks about the role and responsibility of a parent in the life of their child: “You will be the first teachers of your child in the ways of faith; may you also be the best of teachers.” The Catechism also teaches that “parents are the first representatives of God” to their children (CCC, 239).
- Pope Saint John Paul II recognized the challenges facing families in these days in his apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*: “The family in the modern world, as much as and perhaps more than any other institution, has been beset by the many profound and rapid changes that have affected society and culture. Many families ... have become uncertain and bewildered over their role or even doubtful and almost unaware of the ultimate meaning and truth of conjugal and family life.” (FC 1)
- Archbishop Hebda echoes the opportunity parents have to show radical love to their children in his pastoral letter: “Parenting is an intense form of youth ministry: a mission of corporal and spiritual works of mercy directed toward one’s own children. ... A family that is rooted and united in Jesus and that has experienced his love so humbly expressed in the Upper Room, will be a shining example of evangelization and mission.” (You Will Be My Witnesses 26)
- Whether or not they realize it, “Parents ... bear witness ... first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well-suited for education in the virtues.” (CCC 2223). The Catechism is very clear that it is not only the right but the duty of parents to be the first and most prominent voice in the formation of their children—before and beyond any formation they might receive in the parish community (CCC 2226).

Reflection Questions:

1. What most moved you about the teaching?
2. What does your conscience tell you regarding the role of parents in their children’s lives?
3. Where in the archdiocese do you see this proposition being lived well? Not so well?