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*Catechesis Familiar: A Program of New Evangelization and
Life-long Catechesis for the Family and through the Family*

A Pastoral Synthesis Project by
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Presented to the Faculty of Loyola
Marymount University Department
of Theological Studies

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Pastoral Theological Studies
Los Angeles, California

April 20, 2015

Director Signature

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27 April 2015

Date

PART 1 - PASTORAL PROGRAM PROPOSAL/DESIGN

Introduction

The Archdiocese of Los Angeles has been very blessed in having a very vibrant and creative Office of Religious Education judging by the successful Religious Education Congresses held annually in Anaheim and the growing number of highly qualified directors of religious education and catechists. Parents are more and more involved in the religious formation of their children in the programs for First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation, as they participate in classes periodically to help them grow in their faith and accompany their children as they are being prepared in religious education classes. While children are being prepared, parents are encouraged to take their children to the Sunday liturgy and to work with them in discussing the Sunday readings and homilies.¹ The parent formation and participation in the Sunday liturgy are important aspects of Whole Community Catechesis.² Most people accept the basic premise that parents are the primary educators of their children and must continue modeling Catholic Christian living to their children. At the 2012 Religious Education Congress, Daniel S. Mulhall, an author of religious education texts, stated that well-prepared catechists do a good job teaching an hour and a half a week, and then they may give three hours of homework, but students must spend **nine hours living** what they have learned.³ The implication of this statement is that what happens in the home after homework is what matters the most in order to successfully catechize or form young people in their faith.

There are several questions that have to be asked at this point. Do parents live and model their faith at home with their children, instructing when necessary since classes rarely cover all that has to be learned about our faith? Are there follow-up studies that can answer this question? A more important question: Are parents living and continually growing in their faith or in their relationship with Christ in the first place, that is, before they register their children for sacramental preparation? Finally, a

question more pertinent to this pastoral proposal is: If the parents are the primary educators of their children and they are the most influential in modeling, teaching, and yes, evangelizing their children, why not focus first on the parents, evangelizing and catechizing them? If this is done, would it not be a realization of Cardinal Roger Mahony's vision for the family of the future in which "parents will take greater responsibility for the religious education of their children," catechizing at home and reducing the need for parish-centered programs of religious education.⁴

The project

I propose to develop a catechetical program primarily aimed at Spanish-speaking immigrant parents of children and youth preparing for First Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation in Lancaster, California. This program would be a pilot program aimed at the immigrant population not currently participating in parish programs at Sacred Heart Church. It would depart from traditional religious educational programs and would adapt the process of *catequesis familiar*⁵ as it is followed in Latin America, in several countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and in a few parishes in the United States. The most prominent aspect of the program, to be elaborated more completely below, is that parents would not leave their children off at the parish to be catechized, but rather, they would meet with lead or guide couples (*parejas guías* or *matrimonios-guías*, the term used in Argentina) and other couples once a week in order to grow primarily in their own faith.⁶ After each meeting, parents would receive materials to use with their children on a weekly basis, in effect making *them* the catechists. The immediate goal of *catequesis familiar* is to evangelize or re-evangelize baptized adults and catechize them in a life-long process that is required for a life-long and growing relationship with Jesus Christ. The parents in turn evangelize and catechize their children, first, in a structured and formal way, following parish guidelines and supervision, and second, in a way that is experienced through their ordinary living out of their family life in Christ.⁷ The long-term goal is to build up and strengthen the family – the

building block or basic cell of society and the Church – making it a true and vital domestic church in every sense of the term. Ideally, the family as a domestic church would respond to Christ's call to go out and evangelize other families in a way that clergy and lay pastoral ministers cannot do.

The following will develop more completely 1) why it is important to focus on Spanish-speaking immigrant families, 2) a description of family catechesis and 3) the concrete steps necessary to implement the process.

The critical need to strengthen Spanish-speaking families

It is not possible to state all the ways the family is being weakened and losing its ability to form true disciples of Christ for the future. More and more studies are focusing on the crisis of the family,⁸ so the question is: Why should we focus on Spanish-speaking immigrant families? First of all, they are fast becoming the largest group in the American Catholic Church and even more so in Lancaster. According to Dr. Hosffman Ospino, Hispanic adults make up 37% of all American adult Catholics, while Hispanic youth make up 55% of all Catholic youth and only 4% go to Catholic schools.⁹ He stated in a presentation at a recent Religious Education Congress in Anaheim that Hispanic Catholics, nationally, are at the bottom in a study on knowledge of faith and teachings of different religious groups.¹⁰ Archbishop Jose Gomez, Timothy Matovina, and many other theologians and national Hispanic Church leaders have spoken and written about the potential of Hispanics being the "salt" to renew the American Catholic Church.¹¹ Unfortunately, studies show that, as Hispanics are acquiring the dominant cultural patterns of Americans, they begin to leave the Catholic Church almost as fast as American Catholics.¹²

Other factors that make the need to strengthen Spanish-speaking families In Lancaster include its fairly isolated geographic location, the rapid growth of Spanish-speaking immigrants and the need for another parish with Spanish-speaking clergy and lay ecclesial ministers. Services to the Spanish-speaking

have not kept pace with population growth, and the distance from Los Angeles parishes with more vibrant parish life for immigrants exacerbates the situation for a population that is very transient. Also, lower housing expenses – renting and buying – have attracted many immigrants, but greater work opportunities still remain in Los Angeles, which requires a one and half hour to three hours commute time one-way.

In the last census the population of Lancaster was set at 157,000 and is continuing to grow at a very high rate due mostly to the influx of Spanish-speaking immigrants. Hispanics number 38% or 60,000, and 55% or 33,000 would still consider themselves Catholic. Of this number, 40% or 13,200 stated that they attend religious services weekly.¹³ A generous estimate of those who attend church regularly is about 1200, and 10,000 for Ash Wednesday and Christmas. While regular Mass attendance is not a good indicator of determining who is a good Catholic, especially as regards Spanish-speaking immigrants,¹⁴ it does demonstrate that there is a need for greater outreach to Spanish-speaking immigrants.

Another important reason to focus on the Spanish-speaking is that written resources in *catequesis familiar* –developed and improved over thirty years in South America - are in Spanish. These include: *La Catequesis Familiar en los Documentos de la Iglesia*¹⁵ and *¡Testigos!*¹⁶ –a text which includes testimonies from bishops, pastors, lay ecclesial ministers, parents, and children which point to the effectiveness of family catechesis. Included in these testimonies are the stories of clergy, religious and laypeople who were martyred for promoting this program. They were considered threats by *Sendero luminoso* – the Maoist terrorist group – and assassinated in the early 90's in Peru. The text, *Método de la Catequesis Familiar*, includes the theological foundations, organizational structure relating different components of the program to the parish, pedagogical principles from Scripture, a thorough explanation of the

methodology of "see, judge, act, review and celebrate," and a description of the spirituality of *catequesis familiar*.

An important component of *catequesis familiar* is the formation of ecclesial base communities which thrived in Latin America, because they met the needs of people who valued community and empowered people – primarily in rural areas and needy, depressed urban areas - to express their deepest needs especially their "*hambre de pan y hambre de Dios*." While base ecclesial communities have not flourished in the United States, an adapted form closely resembling the R.C.I.A. can meet this population's need for community and formation, while preparing them to regain their parental teaching authority which sometimes has been replaced by popular and school culture.¹⁷

What is *catequesis familiar*?

Before stating how the program functions, it is necessary to express what it is, in the light of our faith: "*La catequesis familiar es un don del Espíritu Santo a la Iglesia, en respuesta al hambre de Dios y al hambre de pan de su pueblo.*"¹⁸ There are many ways to approach the definition but its promoters recognize the Spirit working in the family through the instrument of *catequesis familiar*. The Spirit is enabling the family – especially the parents – to continue Christ's mission of evangelizing and bringing us back to the Father. That is to say, it is God's work and not the brainchild of specialists, master catechists, theologians or publishers. Ultimately, *catequesis familiar* is a process in which the Spirit is working to transform the family from within through a **lived experience of faith** in family life. Cognitive knowledge, acquired in a classroom is important; but wisdom that comes from experience – an experience that is rooted in "*sentir*" and "*gustar*" (an insight from Ignatian spirituality) - which leads to living faith more fully especially in our actions of love/service, is more important.

What does the process look like in concrete terms? The process will vary from diocese to diocese and parish to parish, but there are certain elements that are always present in most programs. After the pastor is convinced of its efficacy and is willing to promote it, directors, coordinators, lead couples and *animadores* are prepared in workshops at the parish, deanery and regional level. (There are plans now to begin to have meetings of parishes with this model of family catechesis to evaluate the process and plan training sessions and workshops. Sister Edith Prendergast is providing a place and time for parish coordinators to meet at the 2015 Religious Education Congress.) The next step would be to register families, and they will then all meet with the Director/Coordinator of the program. At this first orientation meeting, parents will be divided into small groups of six to eight couples, determined by their neighborhood or geographical area. After presentations, group discussion, dynamics and prayer, each group will select a lead couple to represent them. Lead couples can be named by the Pastor or Director and may include Deacons and their wives or other lay ecclesial ministers or other couples whose children have received the sacraments and are notably living an active Christian life. Then lead couples participate in several training sessions at the parish, deanery, regional or archdiocesan level. The sessions include aspects of a retreat (scripture reflection, prayer, and sharing) besides going through the method and use of parent materials. There will be other training sessions for *animadores*, made up of young adults, ideally former catechists.¹⁹

Finally, the program officially begins when the Director meets with the lead couples to do the first lesson, as it will be used by the lead couple with other couples to be used in the ensuing meetings of the different groups, scheduled a few days after. The Director or Coordinator will subsequently meet every week with the lead couples to do each lesson before they meet with couples. The meeting with couples ideally will take place in the home of one of the couples. Also, the Director or another coordinator will meet with *animadores* to go through lessons that will be used in meetings of *animadores* and the

children. In the Antelope Valley, it is much more convenient to meet where you live instead of having meetings at the parish which could require some coming a great distance. Moreover, similar to the Renew program, people need to have the experience of faith sharing in their homes, hopefully to continue long after the children or youth have received the sacraments. At the end of each meeting the lead couple will hand out material to be used with the children: Each couple is asked to set up a regular time during the week to sit with the children to do the lesson. On Saturday or Sunday following the meeting, the children will meet with their *animadores* who will not catechize in the traditional sense but present dynamics, stories, dance, games and songs related to the material from the parents-child meeting. This routine is repeated every week. After every five sessions, parents, children and *animadores* meet for a celebration which incorporates dynamics, songs, and themes previously developed.

Before looking at concrete steps to implement this program it is necessary to state simply the goals and objectives of the program. The goal (*meta*) is Christ, succinctly stated by Bishop Luis Bambarén, S.J., in a presentation at the *Primer Congreso Internacional de la Catequesis Familiar* in February of 2003, on the occasion of its twenty-fifth anniversary in Peru. In his address “Comprometidos en la transformación del mundo” he reminded his listeners that “Jesus and all the baptized are united in the same mission to transform the world to save them” and then he stated: “Tenemos la meta y los medios para transformer el mundo. La meta: Cristo. El camino: Avanzar al encuentro con Jesús vivo. Es decir, construir el Reino de Dios en los corazones, en las familias, y en la sociedad.”²⁰

Sister Augusta Carrara, the Director of the National Office of *Catequesis Familiar* in Lima, also stated that the objective (*propósito*) of the program is “to construct a community of communities” – communities being the families and the small base communities, and the community being the parish.²¹

Steps to implement *catequesis familiar*

At the beginning, it is necessary to raise the awareness of pastors concerning the issues/problems of the Spanish-speaking immigrants and their families in the Antelope Valley beyond what is already known on a global level. It is important to demonstrate that the theological foundations (beginning with Scripture, teachings from tradition, and recent important teaching from the Second Vatican Council to the present) have to be taken seriously. Pope Francis' constant challenge is that we all answer the call to be evangelizing missionaries or evangelizing disciples of Christ and *catechesis familiar* may be the most powerful means to evangelize the family. The second step will not take place unless the pastors opt for the program and support it.

The second step is to evaluate all resources available to implement the training program at a local level. Resource here refers to gifted people and other programs such as Marriage Encounter, Spanish-speaking prayer groups, the established Religious Education team, R.C.I.A, the Christian Family Movement, and clergy and laypersons already familiar with the program. The implementation of this program will not be successful if it is done in isolation from the parish community. These groups at Sacred Heart Parish all have a stake in a program that focuses first on the family and their experience and gifts can only enhance the program, especially in the recruitment and preparation of lead couples. Another important group with which to network is the community of Benedictine monks at St. Andrew's Abbey, which already is providing retreats and space for Spanish-speaking groups. Their expertise in *lectio divina*, and liturgical and contemplative prayer has to be utilized.²² Lastly, there are more and more programs of faith formation and evangelization being offered by the Archdiocese in Palmdale and Lancaster, all in Spanish, which prepare more and more lay ministers, who will be able to mentor the first lay ministers of children – the parents.

The third step would be to spend several weeks – at least four – to raise the awareness of the parish community concerning the needs of the family and the call to all to be missionary disciples. While many

families, English and Spanish-speaking, will not be participating, the program needs the support of all to be more successful. A final step would be to bring in all parents for a one-day mini-orientation/retreat to pray and present the program before registrations begin. There are many couples who are already doing an outstanding job of teaching and forming their children, first through their example and then through their words. They are needed to accompany parents who are being overwhelmed by cultural and economic factors and who feel unqualified to educate their children in the Catholic faith.

An obvious question is: What about the materials (manuals for the coordinator/director, manuals for lead couples, text for parents, texts and guidebooks for *animadores*, and texts for children)? An evaluation of all materials being utilized in different parishes, primarily in Los Angeles, Orange County and San Diego, has to be done months in advance. The selection of materials will be made once the pastor opts for the program and names a team to implement the program.

The steps to implement the program are not written in stone and are open to change after the “signs of the times” of the reality of the Antelope Valley are discerned in the first group meetings of pastor, clergy, pastoral staff, and parents.

PART 2 – THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR *CATEQUESIS FAMILIAR*

Introduction

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the light was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. (John 1:1-5)

Since the proposed pastoral project deals with catechesis in the context of the family, the following theological argument will begin with Jesus Christ as the “Light” or “Truth” and “Life” (John 14:6) in order to develop God’s plan for the family as domestic church. The importance of Jesus Christ in the process of catechesis is also clearly stated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in Article 1698: “The first and last point of catechesis will always be Jesus Christ himself, who is ‘the way, and the truth, and the life.’”²³ In the *General Directory for Catechesis*, it is stated that “the heart of all catechesis is not a book or a theology system but a person.”²⁴ Specifically, I propose, first, to focus on the family as “domestic church” in the light of Christ beginning with the first family or communion – communion being the most appropriate term to represent Trinity, in whose image we are created - gone astray in Genesis. The use of the creation story is intended to show what truths are applicable to all families now. The premise is that the story is an on-going reality and not a one-time event: Adam and Eve represent all married couples who continue to be co-creators with God. Then, after a brief look at the family’s role of preparing the Chosen people, the focus will be more on the Incarnation and the role of the Holy Family as the primary means of God’s presence made visible in the person of Jesus Christ and the model for all families today. Finally, if the family is to be the basic cell unit of the New Creation – the Body of Christ – then its call to be domestic church can be fulfilled when following the “curriculum” proposed by Maria Harris – supplemented by another “curricular item” offered by Thomas Groome - whose insights on catechetical renewal converge well with the process of *catequesis familiar*.

Before looking at Genesis, it is important to clarify or define simply, what is meant by “church” in a broad sense and what is meant by “catechesis.” The word “simply” is used because these terms can be studied in depth, especially when one develops a theology of church fully. This is not within the scope of this project because the theology implicit in these terms has to be applied pastorally. The “simple” theology proposed here has to be applied to the “here and now,”²⁵ and be relevant to the everyday life of Spanish-speaking immigrants.

“Church” - in a broad Christian sense - is any place where two or three persons are gathered in Christ’s name: “...For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Matthew 18:20).²⁶ The commentary in the *Biblia Católica de la Familia* offers an important insight on Matthew 18:15-20: “Cada vez que hacemos algo como familia teniendo presente a Cristo, el mismo Cristo se hace presente entre nosotros en medio de nuestra comida familiar, evento deportivo, graduación, solución de algún conflicto, o en cualquier otra ocasión de nuestras vidas.” At the end, the commentator quotes Psalm 133:1: “¡Qué bueno y agradable es que los hermanos vivan unidos!”²⁷ It is not only “good and pleasant” but – in the light of Christ – it is a glimpse of the kingdom of God made present in the here and now. From the perspective of the economy of salvation or *oikonomia* – to state this in a different way - the flow of Trinitarian life is made present through the person of Jesus Christ and the action of the Holy Spirit in the reality of the family, to be developed below when looking at the Incarnation and the Holy Family.²⁸

Bill Huebsch’s definition of catechesis is: “To echo the faith in one’s life by sharing it with others.” His “vision of sharing faith together as a means of experiencing ongoing conversion is the backbone of whole community catechesis.”²⁹ His idea of “whole community” is that everyone – not just certified catechists – are involved in faith-sharing in different contexts and the phrase “ongoing conversion” can very well be replaced by life-long growth in our faith, or better, life-long growth in our relationship with

Christ. He states that the family context is one of many instances of faith-sharing, but one of the underlying premises of this project is that the family is the primary place of catechesis, and parents have to be considered the principal pastoral ministers of the home, and other pastoral ministers, including the clergy and catechetical staff, have to be at the service of the parents. This would involve moving out to where the families live – not fearing “the smell of sheep,” to echo Pope Francis’ challenge – in order to revitalize the basic cells of the community.

God’s Plan for the Family from the Beginning

God’s plan for the family can be stated as God’s will for the family, and God’s will for each person is just “become who you are.”³⁰ This implies that one knows who she or he is, that is, knowing one’s true identity – a life-long endeavor. Our true identity is succinctly stated in Genesis 1:26-27: “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness’...” They are then given “dominion” over all of animal life not created in God’s image. Then, the writer of Genesis repeats that God created humankind in his image and added: “In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”³¹ In Genesis 2, the second narration of man and woman’s creation begins with Adam, who God forms from the dust of the earth and is given life by “breathing into his nostrils” (Genesis 2:7). In the first chapter, God’s will, after blessing them, is that they “be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it (1:28),” and in the second chapter God’s will or plan is that “they become one flesh” (2:24). Their being fruitful by becoming one flesh is an expression of being who they are in God’s image.³² “Becoming one flesh” is much more than *eros* – physical union – but union of body and soul as in *agape*,³³ a love of sacrificial self-giving for the good of the other. In the light of Christ, what can be added is to be one as Christ is one with the Father. Jesus expresses his deepest desire or his will for his followers when he prays that his followers be one and adds: “As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21). At this point it is

necessary to underline that we are given freedom – part of our divine DNA – and we tend to choose being in the “dark.” (This is implied in the story of Noah, whose family represents the only one choosing to be in the light.)

Though the Chosen People of God would not know God as Trinitarian and perfect loving and receiving of three distinct persons, they nonetheless discerned God’s free-flowing love throughout their history, even comparing God to a loving husband/king who never fails to love and forgive his unfaithful bride, his Chosen People.

St. Gregory of Nyssa’s poetic account *On the Making of Man* has God looking at Himself as model in creating man and woman.³⁴ Gregory refers to God as the “Entertainer of our nature” as he prepares a home³⁵ – all of creation, and especially the Garden of Eden – for his special guests. He highlights God’s desire that the first couple be happy and sharing in his own divine nature: He assigned to man [and woman] the task “not the acquiring of what was not there, but the enjoyment of all things which were there and for this reason He gives him as foundations the instincts of a two-fold organization blending the Divine with the earthy, that by means of both he may naturally and properly be disposed to each enjoyment, enjoying God by means of his more divine nature, and the good things of earth by the sense that is akin to them...”³⁶

Pope John Paul II, referring to Genesis, best summarizes what is above: “God is love (I John 4:8) and in Himself He lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in His own image and continually keeping it in being, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion.”³⁷ He adds that “love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.”³⁸ Since we are created with complete freedom, then we can choose not to acknowledge our identity in God and complete

dependence on Him. Sin can be stated as the refusal to accept God's free-flowing Trinitarian love/communion, which disables us from sharing his love. As stated above, the Chosen People of the Old Testament were aware of God's compassionate and forgiving love and the promise of a Messiah – through those few who discerned and responded to the Love/Holy Spirit, who was always present.

God's Plan Moves Forward

The great event of the Old Testament that begins to reveal God's saving plan is the Passover, resulting in their freedom from slavery, as narrated in Exodus. The role of the parents and the family is very clearly stated. Even before being freed, Moses is reminded that God has hardened the heart of the Pharaoh so that he, Moses, can tell his children and grandchildren how God has made fools of the Egyptians and worked signs to demonstrate that He is the Lord (Exodus 10:2). And in Exodus 13 it is more clearly stated, when the Passover is celebrated:

When in the future your child asks you, "What does this mean?" you shall answer, "By strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from human firstborn to the firstborn of animals. Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord every male that first opens the womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem" (Exodus 13:14-15).

And in Deuteronomy the inspired writer again states God's will: "But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children" (Dt. 4:9).

Further on in Deuteronomy the writer states more clearly what our relationship with God requires:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise (Dt. 6: 4-7).

It is important to take note that the Israelites were in the desert and there were no synagogues requiring that formation in the faith took place primarily in the home. It can also be stated that the

family represented “the community of memory of God’s action in the lives of the Israelites.”³⁹ Whatever the circumstances, the most important Judaic practice of the Passover was celebrated and continues to be celebrated in the home. The first Christian communities of Jews, who continued to go to the Temple and synagogue, celebrated the New Passover meal – the Eucharist – in their homes, before churches were built. Joseph and Mary not only were devout Jews but there is no reason to believe that Jesus learned not only Scripture at home, complemented by weekly attendance in the synagogue, but learned his true identity from Joseph and Mary, and even more important was completely open – as his mother – to the Love/Holy Spirit of his Father.

The Incarnation: The Holy Family as Icon of the Trinity and Blueprint for all Families

Very little is known of Jesus’ early family life in contrast to his public life, but for the purpose of this project, it is important to focus on Mary and Joseph. As it was stated above, God continued to be present through the Holy Spirit, forming a community in which his Son would be born. Richard Rohr once wrote, “God’s main problem was how to give Himself away,”⁴⁰ and he added that people would commonly respond to God’s offer to give Himself to them as: “I am not worthy. I would rather have religion and morality, which give me the impression that I can win a cosmic contest by my own efforts.”⁴¹ Perfect giving requires that one receive the gift perfectly, and Mary – Christians believe – was the only one at this point of salvation history who received the gift of God perfectly. We address her now as “full of grace,” which implies that her state of being immaculately conceived enabled her person to be a completely emptied vessel to receive the Love (Holy Spirit) of God. Her fiat or “yes” to God’s offer to have his Son is the first of the Joyful Mysteries, which can represent the “Good News of the Family,” and serve as the foundational theology supporting *catequesis familiar*, at least within the context of this study.

Mary, Mother of Christ and Mother of the Church

Focus on Mary will be limited since she is already revered by Spanish-speaking immigrants, especially

Mexicans. What can Mary teach parents about receiving Christ more completely in our minds, heart and soul, enabling them to be effective evangelizers and catechists of their children? How was Mary able to listen to, believe and accept God's will in a way that she could exclaim: "Here am I, the **servant** [my emphasis] of the Lord; let it be with me, according to your word" (Luke 1:38)?⁴²

Richard Rohr suggested four characteristics that can help understand her stance before God – her spirituality: "vulnerability, humility, longing and radical trust."⁴³ These characteristics can be found in Christian contemplatives or mystics and this is significant if we take Karl Rahner's oft-quoted words seriously: "The devout Christian of the future will either be a 'mystic,' one who has experienced 'something,' or he [or she] will cease to be anything at all."⁴⁴ (Experiencing "something" can also be stated of being fully awake to God's presence within us and around us, and corresponds to "mysticism of everyday life" for all people.) Parents and other family members can rightly ask: Who are we to aspire to be like Mary much less to be a mystic? First of all, the problem of putting Mary on a very high pedestal can be an obstacle to recognizing our kinship with her, which is suggested in the dialogue that took place between Mary and Juan Diego at the hill of Tepeyac in 1531.⁴⁵ Secondly, when one talks of mystics, one thinks of some sort of otherworldly human who is especially gifted, such as a John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila or Therese of Lisieux, but we are all potentially able to be mystics due to our divine DNA if we accept the truth of ourselves being the *imago dei*. A closer look at these four characteristics can be helpful, especially through the lens of Ignatian spirituality when applicable.

Mary's openness or **vulnerability** is her complete ability to be present to reality, to be able to see with a "third-eye," a concept developed by Richard Rohr's *The Naked Now*.⁴⁶ In the chapter entitled "Three Ways to View the Sunset," he writes that the first way to see is sensate, which deals only with seeing, feeling, touching, moving and fixing. The second way of seeing is to enjoy what the first sees but goes further and enjoys making sense of what he is seeing, using his imagination, intuition, and reason.

The third way sees what the first and second see, but goes beyond seeing and explaining to remain “in awe before *an underlying mystery, coherence, and spaciousness* that connected him with everything else. A person who sees this way uses his/her third eye, which is the full goal of all seeing and all knowing.”⁴⁷ Rohr calls this gazing “mystical” and it takes place when “heart space, mind space and body awareness are all simultaneously open and nonresistant.”⁴⁸ For him it is a presence which “is experienced as a moment of deep inner connection, and it always pulls you intensely satisfied into the naked and *undefended* [my emphasis, because this refers to Mary’s vulnerability] now, which can involve both profound joy and profound sadness.”⁴⁹ Belief in the Immaculate Conception of Mary has to lead to acceptance of Mary’s contemplative/gazing as a life-long stance. She lived the exhortation of Psalm 46:10: “Be still, and know that I am God!” She was the daughter of Israel whose heart never went astray, who always regarded God’s ways and was always at rest in Him (in contrast to those whose hearts go astray in Psalm 95:10-11). Her confusion at the angel’s greeting, referring to her as God’s “favored one (Luke 1:28),” may have been an indication of her humility in which she attributed all of her gifts to God’s greatness and free-flowing love.

Further commentary on contemporary Mariology is necessary here to support the above statements referring to Mary’s Immaculate Conception. Karl Rahner reinterpreted the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption which were previously explained as prime examples of privileged-centered Mariology. Mary Hines summarizes his view:

The Immaculate Conception refers to the fact that Mary’s life was caught up with God’s Grace right from the first moment of her conception, in virtue of the redeeming action of Christ. The Assumption implies the same about the end of her life. Body and soul, Mary’s whole person is with God, her human life radically accepted, which is according to Christian belief, the ultimate hope of all humanity. These two dogmas offer us the conviction and the hope that our lives, too, are graced from beginning to end, that ultimately grace will triumph over sin and we, too, will find God’s ultimate gracious acceptance. Thus Mary’s life offers a paradigm and a hope for all human life.⁵⁰

Mary Hines, the author of the above statement, also wrote that “all affirmations about Mary are to be in the light of this hermeneutical principle: Christ is the one Mediator and the maternal duty of Mary toward men [and women] in no way obscures this mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power.”⁵¹

Mary was very **humble** before God’s greatness and aware of her role as the one who points to Jesus, as evidenced by her words at the wedding in Cana: “Do whatever he tells you (Jn 2:5).” Moreover, the incident (Synoptic Gospels) in which she appears with other members of Jesus’ family, points to her **obedience** and role as the model of one who hears the word of God and acts on it (Mk 3:20-35; Mt 12:46-50; Lk 8:19-21). Hines adds that John’s view of Mary at the foot of the cross (Jn 19:25-27) is included to show Mary as the “model of belief and discipleship, member par excellence of the believing community.”⁵²

At this point, one has to ask if the average family is capable of acquiring the mystical stance of Mary, much less that of saints known for their mysticism.⁵³ The good news is that married couples and new parents regularly have these contemplative/mystical moments. An experienced spiritual director, or a lead couple familiar with spiritual direction guidelines, can evoke these responses and help couples name these experiences, so as to savor them and encourage them to incorporate them into ordinary family prayer life. An example of a “long, loving gaze” moment is a couple’s first wedding dance, which anticipates their first complete giving themselves to each on their wedding night. Referring to this conjugal union, one newly-wed husband I spoke to broke down in tears because he understood in a more profound way what receiving Christ’s body at the Eucharist was all about. Another example, experienced by most parents, is holding their babies in their arms in silence, in which there is a long, loving gazing between them. A parent’s experience in this moment can give him or her a sense of how God feels toward us, since this capacity is an inherent attribute given to us as *imago dei*. A personal experience was witnessing a father with his seventh-month daughter in his arms, who were just looking

at each other in silence, and this during the homily given by the very gifted pastor at Sacred Heart.⁵⁴ Like Mary, St. Ignatius believed that God is found in all things and his genius lies in guiding his followers in a methodical way to discern God's loving presence within and outside of themselves.

Wilkie Au, guided by Ignatius' insights and methods, offers practical, easily applicable suggestions for being still, open/vulnerable, trusting or obedient, and humble as Mary is before God, in "Practicing Crabgrass Contemplation," from his book *The Enduring Heart*.⁵⁵ The deepening of this contemplative stance also helps one be aware of one's deepest longings, related to your truest self. He describes this contemplation as "crabgrass" – as contrasted to "hothouse," as in a monastery - because it grows anywhere even in a crack in the sidewalk.⁵⁶ It refers to those moments in our hectic and noisy environment which offer opportunities for reflection and contemplation. The basic assumption of Ignatius is that God is found in all things, and that He is constantly communicating with us through our insights, feelings, desires, and all ordinary occurrences of our lives. What is necessary is to be aware of the need to stop and be still and then follow a prayer discipline. Au elaborates on the Ignatian spiritual discipline of the examination of consciousness or awareness exam which include: 1. Gratitude for all blessings received during the day after a brief reflection; 2. Prayer for the grace of enlightenment and trust in discerning painful moments, in order to be free of defensiveness and blind spots; 3. Attention to feelings – especially those that are painful – moods, thoughts, and urgings in order to discern what is happening in our lives and where God may be speaking to us; 4. Prayer for forgiveness directed to God and asking for forgiveness from those of the family with whom we are praying; 5. Prayer for grace "to live with renewed hope and increased love of God and others."⁵⁷

An important insight – possibly the most important – of Ignatius, which corresponds well with Marian spirituality is the importance of having a grateful heart. Mary's awareness of being gifted or being "full of grace" (participating more fully in the very life of God) and being thankful reached its fullest

expression in her Magnificat, which is intentionally prayed by all who pray the Liturgy of the Hours in the evening to be thankful for all that God has given them during the day. Mary's *fiat* is the ultimate expression of her radical trust and it represents her perfect giving made possible by her perfect receiving due to her vulnerability, humility and longing. A foundational belief of Ignatius is that *service* flows from a grateful heart or – according to Luke – a heart filled with grace. Thus, she could easily say “yes” to God’s plan for her.⁵⁸ Again, her life-long stance before God, characterized by four qualities above, implies that she was always saying “yes.” Ignatius helps us be aware of God’s constant presence and constant offering of free-flowing love.

Joseph

The above comments are only “scratching the surface” of Mariology and to complete the study of the Holy Family as the visible presence of the Trinity, it is important to delve into Christology, which will only be referred to briefly within the early family life of Jesus. The role of Joseph is also relevant here, especially when one considers the frequent absence of the father in the Christian formation of children due to work obligations requiring more travel time for those in the Antelope Valley. Leonardo Boff attempts to take St. Joseph out of the “marginal position in which he has been left and to provide him with the central role that he deserves.”⁵⁹

Boff attempts to demonstrate Joseph’s fatherhood as unique, qualifying him as “spiritual, Davidic, legal, adoptive, matrimonial, nurturing, functional, educating, virginal, Messianic and personified” (in the sense of his allowing the Father to personify himself in him, a theological theory of Boff).⁶⁰ He is matrimonial father because his marriage is real and legal, and thus he exercises all the rights and duties as father over Jesus. Boff cites John Paul II who states Joseph’s family is “a true human family...In this family Joseph is the father: his fatherhood is not...‘apparent’ or merely ‘substitute’...Rather, it is one that

fully shares in authentic human fatherhood and the *mission of a father in the family* [my emphasis].”⁶¹

Concerning the qualification of “virginal,” Boff would prefer to use “chaste” since he sees no dogmatic impediment to acknowledging that Mary and Joseph had a normal married life, reminding his readers that “conjugal love is a symbol of God’s covenant with humanity and with the church.”⁶² The quality of “*nurturing father*” is more significant and very applicable to family catechesis and evangelization.

What is clearly stated in Scripture about Joseph is that he was “a just man” or “righteous man” (Matthew 1:19). Now, since a just man is just because he does justice, the question is: What is justice in the biblical sense? This is more meaningful here in order to highlight the vocation/call/challenge to fathers of Spanish-speaking, immigrant families in the Antelope Valley. Tim Keller writes that to do justice, referring to the word *mispat* (used more than 200 times in the Hebrew Old Testament), means to “give people what they are due, whether punishment or protection or care.”⁶³ The recipients of the protection and care are “widows, orphans, immigrants and the poor,” who were considered the most *vulnerable* [my emphasis] at the time.⁶⁴ He uses another word for Biblical justice, which is more applicable to Joseph: *tzadeqah*, referring to a life of right relationships or “being just,” and being in a right relationship primarily with God and then with others. One must be compassionate as God is.⁶⁵ Boff elaborates on the true spirituality of the “just” using two other concepts of *saddiq* (just) and *Hasid* (pious).⁶⁶

First comes the concept of pious *Hasid*. The *Hasid* is the person who lives intensely the duty to love God, who cultivates a great intimacy with him, who is sensitive to his intentions, which are expressed by the law as a live manifestation of his will. The pious person completely inserts himself or herself in the spiritual tradition of the people through a religious practice *within the family* [my emphasis] through taking part in the holy festivals, and through the weekly attendance of the synagogue...The person who possesses this characteristic, who is pious, becomes just (*saddiq*) when this person becomes a beacon of the community, educates the younger ones by example, conquers through acting righteously and garners the trust of the rest of the community and thus becomes a reference for the collectivity.⁶⁷

Boff cannot accept Joseph as a silent and discreet figure, lost in the masses. Being only a carpenter does not mean he is not qualified to educate his son in ways that the teachers of the temple could not. “His love of God and his love of the neighbor, his observing of the traditions and of the law, all these constituted the aura that flooded his house and workshop.”⁶⁸ Jesus, the man, would learn his true identity as the beloved Son of his Father, in a gradual and nurturing way similar to how all people learn to talk, walk, listen, read, love and just being “just” as his Father, all of which are first experienced in his family life. The knowledge here is not knowledge gained in a classroom setting but is experiential or “participatory.”⁶⁹ An example offered by Boff of this is that he could not have referred to God as *Abba*, an expression of extreme intimacy, unless he first experienced this intimate love from Joseph whom he called *abba*.⁷⁰ Jesus naturally allowed himself to be guided by the Spirit because of the example of both parents. He would later exhort his followers to trust in the Father’s eternal and unconditional love, seeking, striving and *longing* first for the kingdom of God because he witnessed this first in his parents who lived it every day.

In **conclusion**, the original plan of God is that we become who we are, to reflect the communion of God as Trinity, which of course can only be known through Christ. Who we are, is already implanted in our divine DNA, as seen in the story of Creation. Within family life, people can experience somewhat or gain glimpses of what it is to be in God’s image, which is perfect communion. Yet, people fail to look back to the Creator and this requires that “the Word become flesh” (John 1:14) show us, as the Sacrament (used in a wide sense) of God. The Incarnation is not a one-time event because He becomes incarnate in each person who is born into His Body through the power of the Holy Spirit and each is called to *relationship* as God is relationship of three Persons, in perfect giving and perfect receiving. The sacrament of Trinitarian life or the sacrament of the Trinity can be (according to Boff) the Holy Family to which all families are called to be in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, focused on the Father our ultimate end.

To summarize, family life modeled after the Holy Family, is the beginning of life in the Mystical Body of Christ as domestic church. The Holy Spirit is already active bringing about the birth of Christ in our lives, through the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation and these sacred liturgical moments celebrated with the larger family of Christ, the parish, are already anticipated first in the family. *Catechesis familiaris* is a process of growing as domestic church, and a final theological argument will focus on what it means to be Church, based on Luke's *Acts of the Apostles* and insights from contemporary voices who are calling for a catechetical renewal.

The "Curriculum of the Church" and *Catechesis Familiaris*

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayers...Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved (Acts 1:42-47).

This passage can be used to link the first family of Genesis created in God's image, to the Holy Family, to the first Christian families (domestic churches) of the early Church Community/Family, and to families today, called to be or live communion as God is a Communion of three Persons giving and receiving perfectly. This passage occurs after the descent of the Holy Spirit: the Holy Family becomes Family when Mary's *fiat* leads to the conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit, just as the first community of disciples becomes the Body of Christ through the Holy Spirit. "The Acts of the Apostles is sometimes called the Gospel of the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit is the main character in the story, just as Jesus is the main character in the four Gospels."⁷¹ For families today, all begins with the Sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmations).

Maria Harris, Richard J. Reichert and Thomas H. Groome are only three of many theologians who are proposing a renewal of religious education. Many of their insights and proposals converge with the

theological foundations, goal, objectives, methods and practices of *catechesis familiar*. All three want to see more effective programs in forming life-long disciples of Christ.

Maria Harris reminds pastoral leaders that we, the People of God, *are* the Church, and we are not just members of a hierarchical institution. From the moment of our Baptism, we are all called to share in Christ's mission as Priest, Prophet and King.⁷² She wants to highlight that we are all involved in pastoring and educating and she proposes a **"curriculum" based on the early Christian community** found in the Book of Acts.

Reichert emphasizes the relational aspect of forming disciples that begins with hearing the Good News – stated in his study as the New Evangelization, a term used often in family catechesis. He and Groome propose a shift from a classroom paradigm to a relational paradigm, similar to the dynamics of the R.C.I.A. program.⁷³ Reichert sees disciples as those "walking with Jesus, learning from Jesus and participating in the mission of Jesus."⁷⁴ "Walking with Jesus" is life-long and it requires sacramental sensitivity, which is a more heightened awareness of God's presence in all things. We walk with Jesus through sacramental/liturgical prayer and contemplation, and through a contemplative reading/listening of his words in Scripture.⁷⁵

Groome elaborates on this in a slightly different way. He writes that Vatican II redefined Christian faith as not just a summary of belief to be taught in a catechism containing questions and answers, but as a "holistic way of life...engaging head but also heart and hands," which demands right worship and right acting, as well as right belief."⁷⁶ He also envisions a "sharing faith community" paradigm-replacing a "schooling didactic" paradigm which involves "the whole communal life" of all communities within the parish. This would "engage every member as both teacher and learner, across the life cycle from cradle to grave."⁷⁷ He bases his vision on the great commissioning directed to all the People of God: "Go, make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). A well-organized and effective *catechesis familiar* makes parents agents of their families' Christian formation. First, parents are evangelized through the

community of the small ecclesial group of couples facilitated by the lead couple; then the parents evangelize themselves (a life-long endeavor) and subsequently they evangelize their children, who evangelize their parents. Finally, the family evangelizes other families. A phrase which is heard over and over again at workshops and parents' meetings is that "*catequesis familiar facilita la nueva evangelización para la familia desde la familia.*"

Harris looks at the "**what**" or **content of religious education**, referring to it as the "curriculum" of the Church. For her the curriculum is much broader and deeper than just a list of items or themes to be covered in a syllabus. It refers to the five classical forms of being or doing church from the Acts of the Apostles, and she states these as: *koinonia* (community life), *leiturgia* (liturgical/prayer life), *didache* (the life as students and teachers), *kerygma* (life as, first, the recipient of evangelization and then, second, life as an evangelizer), and *diakonia* (life of service to the community).⁷⁸ Groome refers to the same five forms and adds *marturia* (bearing witness to Christian faith, which can be linked with evangelization).⁷⁹

He better articulates the importance of family in living out these forms:

For educating in faith, the *General Directory of Catechesis* emphasizes the ethos of the home. As "the primary agent of an *incarnate* transmission of faith" (No. 207), the family should provide a "positive and receptive environment" and the "explicit experience and practice of the faith" (No. 178). Rather than mere formal didaction, family catechesis is a "Christian education more witnessed to than taught, more occasional than systematic, more on-going than structured into periods." (no. 255) A family's faith is more caught than taught, its communal life *is* its faith curriculum.⁸⁰

The above statement concerning curriculum applies well to *catequesis familiar* except that it is a program in which there is *intentional time* set aside for structured, systematic Biblical reading and reflection, sharing, teaching and praying in the home. Moreover, all the classical forms are directly connected to everyday family life. An example of *leiturgia* would be the main meal shared by the family, which anticipates the Eucharist with the larger parish community. Structured prayer and brief scriptural reading at meal time prepares everyone, not just children, for the Eucharist. It is important to reiterate that aside from its connection with the larger parish liturgical moment, this is *a sacred moment in itself*,

in which all experience or get a glimpse of Trinitarian communion.⁸¹ After five sessions with couples and children, there is a separate celebration with all groups of parents and children. The celebration of Eucharist is augmented by sessions of *animadores* with children in which music and dynamics, similar to liturgical dance, is practiced. The *koinonia*, or community life, begins with marital communion in every aspect of the word and flows into family life, with a greater awareness of the presence of Christ as Head of the family and model and the unifying, guiding and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. The small *comunidad eclesial de base*, of the couples guided by the lead couple, is primarily an experience of Church, and it, in turn, strengthens the family community.⁸² The relationship between family and small base community is a mutually enriching experience, and this is closely related to *kerygma*: There will always be families on fire with the love of Christ, which begins with the growing relationships of spouses consciously living in Christ, and they evangelize other couples. The assumption of the program is that baptized adults are still in need of evangelization and catechesis.⁸³ As was stated above, the goal of the program is to evangelize families so that families can evangelize other families – an aspect of the New Evangelization and the lead couple represents the larger ecclesial community in this ministry, by their actions and words. The *didache* is the actual catechizing of children by parents, using materials adapted to the children, but this comes after, as stated in part one, the parents have been learning within their small base community of other couples guided by lead couples. The pedagogy of God and Christ is an important element of family catechesis, that is studied and practiced in training sessions with lead couples: It is developed by Thomas Groome in *Will There Be Faith* and Sister Augusta and Father Juan in *Método de la catequesis familiar*, previously cited.

Finally, the practice of *diakonia* can best be synthesized in Jesus' washing his apostles' feet, in which he says: "If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). Parents are "washing their children's feet" literally and in countless other ways and they are doing it with love (ideally, following Christ's lead) and it is a life-long loving service (ministering).

This ability to wash your children's feet and adult children washing their elderly parents' feet, is innate, in both the literal and the figurative sense. This is more and more difficult to do, without union with Christ, especially in the Eucharist, but also union with Christ in the Church, the larger Church, beginning with the domestic church, by the power of the Holy Spirit. This living of service/ministry within the family is intended within the program of family catechesis to lead to service to the outside community: There is structured time in the meetings of parents to reflect on real experiences of need in the realm of family life, health, economics and politics. Then, these are looked at in light of the Gospel, following the methodology of see, judge and act.

PART 3 – THEOLOGY OF PASTORAL MINISTRY

This component of the pastoral synthesis project will develop briefly my understanding of pastoral ministry, and then, how this understanding impacts practically on how I see myself as a pastoral theologian in the context of my present ministry and within the proposed project if it is to be implemented here in the Antelope Valley. The first part will respond to three questions: Who is called to ministry, why are they called and how do they carry out this calling? The second part relies primarily on experiences and studies that have helped me grow in my understanding of myself as pastoral theologian.

Before responding to the questions posed above, it is necessary to focus on the meaning of pastoral ministry in a broad sense. The word “broad” is used so as to apply to everyone who is baptized and not just to those responding to a special call within the institutional church (the ordained and lay ecclesial ministers). The best word for “ministry,” at least within the context of this pastoral project, is “service.” The adjective “pastoral” refers to a pastoring or shepherding service, and the model is Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Jesus on several occasions states clearly that he came to serve and not to be served (Mark 10:45, Matthew 20:28, John 13:1-17) that we may live.

Who is called to pastoral ministry?

The answer to this question is already alluded to above in references to Maria Harris’ *Fashion Me A People*, but Edward P. Hahnenberg offers a more thorough study of who is called to minister.⁸⁴ He focuses first of all on the vision of church as reflection of Trinitarian communion as developed in *Lumen Gentium*. He states: “Ministry in the church are those relationships of service that celebrate and carry forward Christ’s mission in the Spirit within a Trinitarian theology of ministry.”⁸⁵ While recognizing the special nature of the ordained, he cites *Lumen Gentium* to propose a paradigm shift in looking at who is called to ministry:

Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood

of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ (Cf. Pius XII, Allocution *Magnificate Dominum*, November 2, 1954: AAS 46, 1954, 669; Encyclical Letter *Mediator Dei*, November 20, 1947, AAS 39, 1947, 555). The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, teaches and rules the priestly people; acting in the person of Christ, he makes present the Eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of the people. But the faithful, in virtue of their royal priesthood, join in the offering of the Eucharist. They likewise exercise that priesthood in receiving the sacraments, in prayer and thanksgiving, in the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity.⁸⁶

Hahnenberg writes that the Vatican II Council Fathers placed Chapter 2, “The People of God,” before the chapter on the hierarchy to show that “the church is not first clergy and ecclesiastical but is rather the *whole church*: the people of God, *Christifideles*, a priesthood of all believers.”⁸⁷ He recognizes the importance of the visible, organizational, institutional elements of the church, but writes that *Lumen Gentium* points to the “deeper dimensions of the church, casting it as a participation in the Trinitarian life of God.”⁸⁸ The universal church, therefore, is seen to be “a people made one by the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”⁸⁹

Hahnenberg attempts to show that a ministry related to Jesus Christ and ministry related to the Holy Spirit are not opposed but one, based on the unity or communion of the Trinity. All ministry begins first with Baptism, in which we become members of the Body of Christ, and then, within the communion of the church, some are called to act *in persona Christi capitis*, or ordained priests, and hierarchy share in Christ’s authority “to build up, sanctify and rule his Body.”⁹⁰ He adds that “this leadership is a share in Christ’s headship and should not be seen in terms of domination, but in terms of service.”⁹¹

In the first pages of *Ministries* (Hahnenberg), the starting point is to change the dividing-line model of ministry to a concentric-circles model that more closely reflects the Eastern theological vision of Trinity as circular rather than the pyramidal vision of the Western Church. In the dividing-line model, the clergy are placed above the laity, and the former, especially in the persons of the bishop or presbyter are considered as “exclusive recipients of a direct call from Christ and as paradigmatic for all ministry.”⁹² It would be “difficult to see the layperson as anything more than a helper or participant in work that

properly belongs to the ordained.”⁹³ In the concentric-circles model in *Ministries*, ministries are placed in the center, surrounded by an outer circle representing the community. In the concentric circles model, Thomas O’Meara refers to Yves Congar to elaborate: “Congar sketched a model which would replace the bipolar division of clergy and laity: a circle with Christ and Spirit as ground or power animating ministries in community.”⁹⁴ There is no implication that the clergy occupy a superior position as in the dividing-line model. Paul uses the phrase “in Christ” constantly to remind the church that they are one in Christ, our common foundation. Moreover, in his first letter to the Corinthians, he states that “each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor12:7), to help his followers understand that each is gifted in a special way and is called to serve according to his or her gifts. He concludes chapter 12 by comparing the church to a body that has many members, whose members are all organically connected for the health and growth of the body. And a most significant insight when considering our community, the Church, and especially the basic cell of the church - the domestic church - is that “if one member suffers, all suffer together with it and if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it” (1 Cor12:26).⁹⁵

So, who is called to pastoral ministry? The answer is: all baptized Christians. The constant reminder of this comes from Pope Francis who is challenging all Catholics to live out their vocation to be missionary disciples. Also, Hahnenberg cites Richard McBrien who offered major themes that summarized the ecclesiology of Vatican II in relation to ministry:

The church is *mystery*. This recognition serves as a corrective to the preconciliar overemphasis on the institutional and organizational facets of the church...The mission of the people of God [the church] includes *service* to human needs in the social, political, and economic orders, alongside preaching of the Word and celebration of the sacraments. This mission is rooted in the mission of Christ as prophet, priest and king, and is *incumbent on all*. [my emphasis] ... The church is presented as a *communion*, thus collegiality, not dominance or authoritarianism, ought to mark the church’s ministry, which is both local and universal.⁹⁶

Why are we called to ministry?

When we ask “why,” we are asking: what are our purposes, what are our immediate and long-range

goals and objectives, or intended learning/teaching/pastoring outcomes? Since we are following Christ and growing in a long-term relationship with him – which can be stated as our basic goal – Thomas H. Groome writes that we must look to Christ to learn what it means to continue his mission. And his mission is best summarized by the symbol “reign of God.”⁹⁷ Jesus taught us to pray to our Father asking first of all that his kingdom (reign) come and that his will be done here and in heaven. Groome points out that the symbol of the “reign of God” was a favored symbol in the Jewish faith, “yet Jesus gave it his own spin as well. Clearly he intended it to mean the realization of God’s intentions – God’s will – for all people and all creation.”⁹⁸ He (Groome) spells it out stating “that God intends *the best of everything for everyone, all the time, and the integrity of God’s creation* [Groome’s emphasis].”⁹⁹ Jesus’ mission can be summarized in his words from John’s Gospel: “I came that [you] may have life, and have it abundantly” (10:10).¹⁰⁰

Our objective, then, as pastoral ministers, is to build up the kingdom of God in the way Jesus did and continues to do through the members of his Body. From the perspective of *catechesis familiaris*, I again refer to Jesus’ words that express his deepest desire for us:

I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one. I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that you have sent me and have loved me. (John 17:20-23)

These words can be connected to those of John 10:10, as the principal means of bringing about the kingdom and that is by *being* one with Christ and then *being* one with those of our family and community, and all of creation. The *medium* of our being communion is the strongest *message* or means to evangelize, catechize and pastor: “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 17:34-35).

How do we carry out our call to be pastoral ministers?

The last statement above focuses on *being* and this may be what is missing most when we begin to evangelize, catechize and pastor, which imply a lot of important *doing*. Gandhi once said: “Be the change that you wish.” Being first a person filled with love and peace enables one to be even more effective in serving others for their sake, and not to satisfy an inner need that may seem to be more important than the common good of forming communion.¹⁰¹ Ultimately, the love has to be self-giving/self-sacrificing and it is in the passion and death of Christ that we have the best example. And it is in the Eucharist where we can contemplate and participate in this love, and if we understand this and are completely open to receiving Christ, then we can rediscover a felt presence of God’s love,¹⁰² and in a sense experience the words heard at his baptism: “You are my Son [Daughter], the Beloved; with you I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22).

In short, the first step in *being* is being in relationship with God, through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is John, again, who zeroes in on this important (the most important?) aspect of our spiritual life as taught by our Teacher: “I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who abides in me while I abide in him produces much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). The immediate goal of being pastoral ministers is to be one in Christ, so as to be able to say with St. Paul: “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me”(Galatians 2:20).

In *Will There Be Faith*, Groome states succinctly what are other steps of *being* before *doing* and while the words are directed to catechists they can apply to other ministries. Focusing on evangelizers and catechists [and pastoral ministers who work in any way with the unevangelized] he “detects” that “Jesus incarnated the divine pedagogy by being welcoming and inclusive, being respectful of learners, being compassionate and committed to justice and being encouraging of partnership and servant leaders.”¹⁰³

One of these ways of *being* is particularly meaningful for myself at this moment of my ministry with incarcerated youth and for parents who are being asked to be the primary evangelizers, catechists and

pastors of their children: *Be "respectful of learners."* Jesus' "whole intent was to empower people to become agents of their faith rather than dependents. He was not looking for docile devotees as a cult leader might do. Jesus wanted his disciples to become people fully alive to the glory of God."¹⁰⁴ Groome asks his readers to imagine how affirmed ordinary peasant people felt when they heard Jesus teach them that they are the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" (Matthew 5:13-14). Then, he points out that Jesus never boasted when curing, but his typical comment was: "*Your faith has made you well*" (Mark 5:34).¹⁰⁵

There are many aspects of being that can enhance one's effectiveness of pastoral ministry, but at this point I would return to the quality of Mary's *being*: Being vulnerable, longing, humble and radically trusting before God. Two ways to approach her contemplative stance before God and of all created reality is through Ignatian spirituality and *lectio divina*. First, Ignatius exhorts his followers in Annotation 23 to desire and choose only what is most conducive for them to live out their lives in conformity to the deepest meaning of their lives. David L. Fleming's contemporary reading of the purpose of our lives is more intelligible: "God who loves us creates us and wants to share life with us forever. Our love response takes shape in our praise and honor and service of the God of our life."¹⁰⁶ The spiritual discipline that Ignatius proposes at this point of his *Spiritual Exercises* is to "take a step back" (ideally learned in a retreat) each day from all concerns, activities, and any distracting noise within and without, and reflect "about God's presence or absence in the events of one's daily life."¹⁰⁷ Is this possible for those who are not required by a rule of life nor living within a religious community? The time needed to practice and to incorporate this discipline, the examen of consciousness, into a busy schedule is not only possible but necessary. The steps can be adapted and can even be given another name. It can be called "time out" or "taking a second breath time." There are many examples from other human endeavors (sports, business, politics) when people take a step back. In the areas of spirituality one only has to refer to the followers of Mother Theresa and Dorothy Day, the followers of

Ignatius (priests, religious and laypersons) who have adapted the spiritual exercises to their busy schedules, and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and seminarians at St. John's Seminary in Camarillo, who spend a half-hour in the morning and a half-hour in the evening in silence during their formation.

The practice of *lectio divina* or praying with scripture is another discipline that enables one to be still, if practiced faithfully, diligently and intentionally. Fr. Luke Dysinger, O.S.B., of St Andrew's Abbey and St. John's Seminary, writes that "*lectio* is reverential listening; listening both in a spirit of *silence* [my emphasis] and of awe. We are listening for the still, small voice of God that will speak to us personally – not loudly, but intimately."¹⁰⁸ In his weekend retreats on *lectio* he has retreatants work in groups (as will be done with groups of parents in family catechesis) and also introduces the practice of *lectio* on life, which parallels the Ignatian awareness examen.

In summary, there will always be books focusing on the "how" or the actions one needs to carry out, but first one has to have their feet firmly planted in Christ. That's why the Los Angeles Archdiocesan Office of Parish Life Directors require that all candidates for PLD certification have a strong spiritual life: They require daily prayer, frequent Mass attendance, yearly retreats and spiritual direction. This is prioritized while completing a graduate program in theology, divinity or pastoral theology.

How do I understand myself as a pastoral theologian?

To answer this question I will focus first on my personal idea of being a theologian and then on the adjective "pastoral" which is related to my call to be a pastoral minister.

First, being a theologian implies that one is attempting to live out the first part of the great commandment given to us by Jesus: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with *all your mind*" (Matthew 22:37). I emphasized "all your mind" because the popular notion of being a theologian is one who has mastered all that can be known about God. We can know him through the sacrament¹⁰⁹ of his Son, and we can arrive at God's perfect love through the life of Christ and glimpses through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit especially in contemplating all of creation,

most prominently experienced in marital and family love. But our knowledge is still inadequate. St.

Paul highlights what is most important:

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

My being a *pastoral* theologian is related to my call – discerned through reflection papers in courses of spirituality and foundations of pastoral ministry - to be a pastoral minister. It begins with a greater awareness of how much I have received from my parents, whose memory is a gift that continues to give years after their passing. It continues to take shape with a continued relationship with the Congregation of Christian Brothers, especially with those Brothers working in South America. And finally, it is strengthened through my present ministry working with incarcerated youth within the context of being part of the parish communities of Sacred Heart, St. Mary's (Palmdale) and Father Serra (Quartz Hill).

As a chaplain at Challenger Memorial Youth Center, I continue to learn to be present in the Marian sense thanks to the minors, staff, volunteers and parish leaders of the above parishes. I see my role as being more and more a companion whose primary activity is to help others discern how Christ is present and working in their lives through the Holy Spirit. The fruitfulness of this endeavor will be directly related to my own growing relationship with Christ in the context of my immediate community. The ongoing learning experience of the present ministry will help me accompany families, especially lead couples, enabling them to see themselves as the primary pastors of their families (the domestic churches). The words of St. John Paul II are applicable to parents and myself and can be made a reality through *catechesis familiar*: "As pastors of the people of God [the family] in America, priests [parents] should be careful to discern the charisms and strengths of the faithful who might be leaders in the community, *listening to them* [my emphasis] and through dialogue encouraging their participation and co-responsibility."¹¹⁰

¹ The parent-child interaction after the Sunday liturgy is documented in a notebook which the child has to turn in to the catechist during the next class.

² Whole Community Catechesis, briefly, is an approach to enrich catechesis by involving not only the parents but clergy, deacons, members of the parish pastoral team, pastoral ministries, and at times, all families of the parish. At Sacred Heart, Lancaster, the DRE and her team have been working very creatively to incorporate the principles of Whole Community Catechesis. The best example of involving people from the parish community was the construction of the town of Bethlehem inside the parish hall, in order to give children and their families a sense of life at the time of the birth of Jesus. Many more parishioners outside of the catechetical team participated as men had to portray Roman soldiers, and others – skilled in handicrafts – portrayed artisans. Hands-on activities for children drew many families, elderly people and youth. Another example of greater involvement of the community beyond the classroom was a reconciliation event, which had parents and children go to four stations – the most important of which was role-playing in which the parent took the role of the priest.

³ Daniel S. Mulhall, "Creating a Partnership with Parents toward Discipleship" (Presentation, Los Angeles Religious Education Congress, Anaheim, CA, 2012. No. 3-16, available at CSC Digital Media, Simi Valley, CA).

⁴ Cardinal Roger Mahony, *As I Have Done For You, A Pastoral Letter in Ministry* (Los Angeles, Holy Thursday, April 20, 2000), http://www.laarchdiocese.org/cardinal/Documents/2000-0420_Pastoral_Letter_Ministry.

⁵ The Spanish is used here to refer to the structured process that began to evolve first of all in Chile and later in Peru and other countries. There are programs referred to as "family catechesis" and may have characteristics of the South American program but lack many of the principal aspects of the latter program.

⁶ These meetings would lead to the formation of a Christian base community in which adults would be evangelized and catechized, similar to the process of evangelization and catechesis experienced in the R.C.I.A program.

⁷ This idea of living out your life *in Christ* is an important theological and spiritual concept that will be developed in the development of the theological foundations for this project.

⁸ *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 47 (Rome, 1965), www.vatican.va/archive/his_councils/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html. The bishops of the Second Vatican Council were already aware of the global need to foster "the Nobility of Marriage and the Family," writing that "this institution is not everywhere reflected with equal brilliance, since polygamy, the plague of divorce, so-called free love and other disfigurements have an obscuring effect." In the Preparatory Document for the III Extraordinary General Assembly, whose theme is "Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelization, Pope Francis and the bishops are greatly concerned by the "widespread practice of cohabitation which does not lead to marriage, and the growing acceptance of same-sex marriage." These are just two of several challenges that threaten the "nobility of marriage and the family." (From www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20131105_iii-asamblea-sinodo-vescovi_en.html.) In the *National Health Statistics Report*, Number 64, of April 4, 2013, from the United States Department of Health and Human Service, Casey E. Copen, Kimberly Daniels, and William d. Mosher reported that "an increase in cohabitation as a first union for all Hispanic origin and race groups occurred between 1995 and 2006-2010, except among Asian groups. The percentage of women who cohabited as a first union increased **57% for Hispanic women** [my emphasis], 43% for white women and 39% for black women over this time period." They added that "U.S.-born Hispanic women had the highest probability (65%) of premarital cohabitation by age 25." In an article entitled "Are Pro-Life Hispanic Catholics the Democrats' Future" (From <http://religiondispatches.org/are-pro-life-hispanic-catholics-the-democrats-future...>) the statistic of 58% of immigrant Hispanics who say that abortion should be illegal was contrasted with 40% and 43% of second and third-generation Hispanics, respectively, who say that abortion should be illegal. The slight rise for the third-generation

is probably related to the number of former Catholics who shifted to Evangelical Protestant congregations who tend to be more conservative.

⁹ Hosffman Ospino, *Evangelización y catequesis en el ministerio hispano* (Liguori, MO: Libros Liguori, 2013), p. 69. As the economic conditions of Hispanics improve they are able to send their children to Catholic schools, but there are a good number of these families who speak only Spanish in the homes, and unless there is an effort to work with Spanish-speaking parents, their role in the Christian formation of their children is limited.

¹⁰ Ospino, ""Evangelización y catequesis en el ministerio hispano: Posibilidades"" (presentation, Los Angeles Religious Education Congress, Anaheim, CA, 2014, no. 4-55 available at CSC Digital Media, Simi Valley, CA).

¹¹ Archbishop José Gómez, *Immigration and the Next America, Renewing the Soul of Our Nation* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 2013). Also, Timothy Matovina, *Latino Catholicism* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012). Dr. Alejandro Aguilera-Titus sees a very influential role of the Hispanic family revitalizing American Catholicism, stated clearly in ""La Biblia, la familia y la iglesia"" (presentation at the 2014 Religious Education Congress in Anaheim, 6-51, available CSC Digital Media, Simi Valley, CA).

¹² Catholics represent the largest group of all religious groups, but former Catholics represent the second largest group. Fr. Robert Spitzer, S.J., in ""Intellectual Preparation for the new Evangelization: Four Critical Challenges from Contemporary Culture"" (presentation at the 2014 Religious Education Congress, Anaheim, CA, 3-24, available at CSC Digital Media) stated that there is a 1% rate per year drop in the number of believers among Christians. If an effort is not made to combat this the number of believers of God will be as low as it is in Europe within fifteen years. Ospino sees secularism, relativism and ideological fundamentalism as three challenges that have to be met by the new evangelization. (*Evangelización y catequesis en el ministerio hispano*. Liguori, MO: Libros Liguori, 2013, p. 41)

¹³ The percentages are from ""The Shifting Religious Identity of Latinos in the United States,"" from *Pew Research – Religion and Public Life Project*, taken from www.pewforum.org/2014/05/07/the-shifting-religious-identity-of-latinos-in-the-United-States. They have been projected onto data from the last census. They are not intended to be accurate since each area is different and the premise in this study is that Lancaster and Palmdale, the sister cities of the west side of the Antelope Valley present unique characteristics not shared by metropolitan Los Angeles, which highlight the greater need to reach out to Spanish-speaking families not being served by the parish.

¹⁴ The Catholic Church in Peru, for example, considers people who do not attend Mass every Sunday as active in their faith if they are faithful in Masses to commemorate the death of a departed family member or are active in religious celebrations, such as the *Vía cruces* or *El Señor de los Milagros*. One has to consider that many immigrants are from rural areas and there is a greater priest shortage than in the United States.

¹⁵ Sister Augusta Carrara and Father Juan Bigoni, *Método de la Catequesis Familiar* (Lima: Oficina Nacional de la Catequesis Familiar, 2002).

¹⁶ Augusta Carrara, *Testigos* (Lima: Oficina Nacional de la Catquesis Familiar, 1994).

¹⁷ The school culture, even that of the Catholic school, should not undermine or replace the parents' role in educating their children.

¹⁸ Carrara and Bigoni, p. 32.

¹⁹ *Animadores* in Peru are usually older teens, but here in the United States they have to be at least 21 years old, due to liability issues.

²⁰ Bishop Luis Bambarén Gastelumendi, S.J., “Comprometidos en la transformación del mundo,” from *Mensaje Final, Homilias, Ponencias del Primer Congreso Internacional de la Catequesis Familiar* (Lima: Oficina Nacional de Catequesis Familiar, 2003), pp. 141-143. He uses the word *corazones* to emphasize that interior conversion comes first, and from this comes the impetus to reach out to the community in actions of peace and justice, following Christ’s way of doing justice. (The meaning of Biblical justice will be treated in the second part of this synthesis, in the development of Joseph’s spirituality. The implication is that peace and *justice begin in the family, whose center is Jesus Christ.*)

²¹ Sister Augusta (Director of National Office of Catequesis Familiar) in an interview on July 20, 2010, in Lima, conducted and video-taped by Alexander Fontes.

²² Whole Family Catechesis will provide guidelines and insights to enhance *catequesis familiar* in a ways that may not have occurred in Latin America. If those responsible for implementing the program network with the resources available, they will take the program and “run with it,” in the same way that clergy, religious and laypersons – made up of Peruvians, Irish, Italian and American missionaries – took the Chilean model and “ran with it.” In other words, they adapted it to the reality and improved on it, under the mentorship of Brother Enrique Garcia, a De La Salle Brother, who was head of the *Instituto Superior de Catequesis* in Santiago, Chile. He is considered the principal developer of the process, which began in Chile.

²³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Second Edition, revised in accordance with the official Latin text promulgated by Pope John Paul II (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticano, 2000) no. 1698, p. 423.

²⁴ *General Directory for Catechesis*, Congregation for the Clergy, (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998), Art. 98, p. 93. Cited in Bill Huebsch, *Whole Community Catechesis*. (New Londonn, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2002), p. 43.

²⁵ Ospino (*Evangelización y catequesis*), p. 4. Dr. Ospino wrote a simple definition of Hispanic ministry in the United States: “*El ministerio hispano es el esfuerzo de atención pastoral y espiritual que la Iglesia en Estados Unidos realiza como parte de su misión evangelizadora con los bautizados cuyas raíces étnicas, culturas y religiosas se insertan en la herencia hispana tal como se vive tanto en Latinoamerica, el Caribe, Espana y el territorio estadounidense.*” This definition allows us to see “the Church as a community of faith or People of God are called to give testimony of the mystery of Christ resurrected **“here and now,”** and for the purpose of this project, **in the context of the Spanish-speaking immigrant family in the Antelope Valley.** For years it is heard that the Gospel message must be “inculturated,” in order to make it life-giving for the people being evangelized. A basic premise here is that each family represents a unique culture, although sharing certain aspects of the dominant cultures – American and Mexican, or American and Peruvian. Ultimately, each family is unique and the process of culture is a dynamic and not a static reality, in which one can attribute certain characteristics, values, or customs to everyone. An example of this uniqueness related to culture can be taken from applied linguistics: Dr. William E. Bull, of U.C.L.A., in *Spanish for Teachers*, (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1965) p. 20, wrote that each person has his or her own unique way of speaking a language. He used the term “idiolect.” This is parallel to a premise of *lectio divina*, which states that each person hears the Word of God in a personal way, applied to a situation corresponding to his or her **“here and now.”** Pedagogically, the best teachers strive to know all of their students’ unique temperament, gifts, and history and are in constant –ideally – contact with the parents. Of course, if the teachers are the parents, then they have the inside track on education and formation, especially in the area of walking, talking, being a person of strong Christian moral values, being a disciplined spiritual person, and ultimately having the tools to grow in a life-long relationship with God, in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

²⁶ *The HarperCollins Study Bible, New Revised Standard Version*, General Editor, Wayne A. Meeks (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993).

²⁷ *Biblia Católica de la Familia* (Córdoba, Argentina: Editorial Verbo Divino, 2011) p. 1212.

²⁸ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us, the Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), pp. 2-3, from paperback edition printed in 1993.

²⁹ Bill Huebsch, *Whole Community Catechesis in Plain English*. (New Londonn, CT.: Twenty-Third Publications, 2002) p. 23.

³⁰ At first reading, “just become who you are” seems to be much too simple, but it is inspired by St. John Paul II’s “Family, Become What You Are” in “Part Three: The Role of the Christian Family” from *Familiaris Consortio* (Citta del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1981). St. John Paul wrote: “The role that God calls the family to perform in history derives from what the family is; its role represents the dynamic and existential development of what it is.” (17) He went on to state, in n. 17, that God’s plan was to establish an “intimate community of life and love” [as in his image of Trinitarian communion].

³¹ All scriptural passages are taken from the *HarperCollins Study Bible*, unless otherwise stated.

³² Can one say that the first married couple or all married couples are also part of the “ordained” ministry? They received “holy orders” not from a bishop but from God, the Creator, and the law is not from Canon Law but from Natural Law. More important, though, if they are baptized they become one with Christ and they definitely have a priestly, prophetic and kingly role. This is not to lower the status of the ordained priesthood, since the spirituality of *catechesis familiar* is principally **Eucharistic**, based on the belief that the Eucharist is the source and summit of Catholic Christian living. This endnote is included because there are still strains of anti-clericalism among Mexicans stemming from the days of the *Reforma* under Benito Juarez and the government movement under President Calles to enforce the anti-clerical laws in the 1920’s. Also, many Spanish-speaking immigrants leave the Catholic Church because they have no voice and the appeal of Evangelical/Pentecostal communities is meeting their desire for a Biblically-based and more egalitarian community. The main text of *catechesis familiar* is the Bible. Little by little the parents will come to appreciate all the richness of the Catholic faith, and understand the concentric-circles model of community developed in Edward Hahnenburg’s *Ministries, A Relational Approach* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2003), pp. 7-23.

³³ Pope Benedict XVI, *God is Love, Deus Caritas Est*. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2006), from Publication No. 5-758, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (Washington, D.C.), pages 5-8.

³⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, accessed from <http://www.piney.com/FathGregNyssa.html> on 9/8/2008.

³⁵ I project family or domestic church on “home,” which is the purpose of including these words from Gregory.

³⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, “Why Men Appeared Last After the Creation,” No. 2.

³⁷ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 12. Cited by John Paul II in *The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, Familiaris Consortio*. (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1981), no. 11. (Published by Pauline Books & Media, Boston, MA, 1981).

³⁸ *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 11.

³⁹ Dr. Brett C. Hoover, in a conference on April 13, 2015.

⁴⁰ Richard Rohr, *Things Hidden, Scripture as Spirituality* (Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2007), p. 31. Related to the feeling of unworthiness as the reason of not accepting God's gift of Himself is the difficulty of "accepting acceptance." Peter G. van Breeman, S.J., devoted the first chapter to this problem in *As Bread That is Broken* (Denville, N.J.: Dimension Books, 1974), pp. 9-16. This difficulty is seen in the contrast between Peter and Judas, after they sinned. Peter believed at a deeper level that he was still loved and was able to accept being accepted. Judas could not believe that he was still loved. The need, first, for a married couple to accept themselves in Christ, unconditionally, and then accept their children unconditionally is the first step toward placing a radical trust in God. If this is not experienced first in the family, it becomes difficult to accept God as a compassionate, forgiving, unconditionally and eternally loving Father. Those who have not experienced the acceptance in the family still may experience it in other communities. Since we are all flawed it is rare that one experiences perfect Christ-like acceptance in the family.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, page 31.

⁴² This translation from *The HarperCollins Study Bible* seems more relevant because of the word "servant" used in place of "handmaid." It relates better to Jesus' washing of the feet in John's Last Supper account. Parents know better than anyone what it means to serve or to be "a la orden," first to each other as spouses, but even more so when they are both at the service of their children. Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio wrote an important book containing addresses to parents and catechists, entitled *El Verdadero Poder es el Servicio* (Lima, Buenos Aires: Editorial Claretiano, 2013). The basic premise is that Mary's greatness, is as she says, from God, but it is her willingness to accept God as servant. She understood this and taught her son this through her example and words. He taught and lived as a Servant, "for the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

⁴³ These qualities are from an audio-cassette on Mary that I used in religion classes at a school in Peru, in the years 1984 to 1986. I had left the cassette in Peru and it was misplaced, so I e-mailed Richard Rohr. He responded on April 20, 2010, stating he had forgotten the title but that he had changed the original "open, little, longing and obedient" to "vulnerable, humble, longing and radically trusting." It is possible to glean these qualities of Mary from Rohr and Joseph Martos' *The Great Themes of Scripture, New Testament* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1987) pp. 77-128: Chapter 3 - "Luke and Acts: The Gift of the Spirit" and Chapter 4 - "Mary, Prayer and the Church: Let it Be."

⁴⁴ Karl Rahner, "Christian Living Formerly and Today," in *Theological Investigations VII*, trans. David Bourke (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), p. 15 as cited in Harvey D. Egan, *Soundings in the Christian Mystical Tradition* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), p.338. The previous citation is from Mary Steinmetz, "Thoughts on the Experience of God in the Theology of Karl Rahner: Gifts and Implications," (*Lumen et Vita*, Volume 2 – 2012, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry). She wrote that Rahner's theology did much to de-mythologize mysticism. An important insight about Rahner's thought is that "the experience of God is an ordinary occurrence, and this sense of normality is related to his understanding of the human person as one who is ultimately oriented toward transcendence." (Page 1) Martin Laird, in "Introduction: God our Homeland," wrote: "This self-giving God, the Being of our being, the Life of our life, has joined to Himself two givens of human life: we are built to commune with God and we will all meet death." From *Into the Silent Land* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 1.

⁴⁵ In the first meeting, she calls herself Juan Diego's "merciful mother," and in the fourth meeting or apparition she refers to Juan Diego as her "littlest and dearest of my sons." Then she calms his fears saying: "Am I not here who am your mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection?" (Accessed from www.queenoftheamericasguild.org/BriefHistoryNew.html on January 1, 2015.)

⁴⁶ Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now, Learning to See as the Mystics See* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2009).

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 27.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 28.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 28.

⁵⁰ Mary E. Hines, "Mary," from *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey. (Collegeville, Minnesota: A Michael Glazer Book, The Liturgical Press, 1993), p. 639.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 639. Taken from *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter 8, n. 60.

⁵² Ibid, p. 635.

⁵³ These are disciplines that are incorporated into the Peruvian model of *catequesis familiar*. It is not a coincidence that Sister Augusta, the director of the *Oficina Nacional de Catequesis Familiar* and Father Juan Bigoni, the former's principal consultant and director of one of the most successful programs at the parish level, are both members of the Congregation of St. Louis of Monfort. Their devotion to Mary and their Ignatian spirituality greatly influence their ministry.

⁵⁴ There are **countless examples of parents and children** experiencing these moments which through a little guidance and more awareness provided by an examination of consciousness and the discipline of *lectio divina* of one's life one, **can be recognized as sacred moments**. Hosffman Ospino's dedication in his *Evangelización y catequesis en el ministerio hispano* is very relevant: "A mi hija Victoria Guadalupe quien nació justo cuando terminaba este libro. Gracias por ser presencia de Dios en nuestro hogar, Fuente de inmensa alegría para tu mamá, tu papa y tu hermanito William Francisco." An then Wilkie Au's dedication is significant when reflecting on our closest relationships: "To Noreen, whose sensibility of heart, acuity of mind, and fun-loving nature make her God's precious gift-soul mate on life's journey," from *The Enduring Heart*. (New York/Mahway, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000) Ospino and Au are obviously more aware of God's loving presence in their lives because of their backgrounds in theology and spirituality but another example can highlight that these experiences are true for everyone if he or she is still and open to the present moment. A Christmas card from a second cousin and his wife, new parents, had these printed words along with pictures of their one-year old baby Phoenix: "Well, we survived our first year of parent (and child) hood. And what a joyous year it has been. Each day we witness Phoenix grow and learn (as we learn a bit too!). Each day our hearts expand even more with love. And each day we pray for maybe just one more hour of sleep!" These examples of family love recall John's words in I John 4:7-10: "Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins." In *catequesis familiar*, moments of reflection and stillness are structured into group meetings with other couples, as well as moments of silent reflection in the home with children.

⁵⁵ Wilkie Au, *The Enduring Heart* (New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2000).

⁵⁶ He borrows the adjective from William R. Callahan, *Noisy Contemplation: Deep Prayer for Busy People* (Hyattsville, Md.: Quixotic Center, 1994), p. 52.

⁵⁷ Au, pp. 138-140. The learning and practice of the awareness exam begin in the weekly meetings/encounters with other couples. The lead or guide couple would be more experienced in this form of prayer and also be aware of some principles of group spiritual direction. This aspect of *catechesis familiar* was not introduced at workshops for lead couples in Lima, but it can be implemented here, since there are more formally-trained lay ecclesial ministers and deacons at Sacred Heart.

⁵⁸ Easily? Though it involves great risk, it would seem that she was already in the Trinitarian “flow” or Love of God and this feeling of being in Love draws – not pushes – one to share, serve and give yourself for the other, which is a God-given innate quality experienced by married couples and parents.

⁵⁹ Leonardo Boff, *Saint Joseph, The Father of Jesus in a Fatherless Society* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2009), p. 7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 34-36.

⁶¹ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, n. 21, from Boff, p. 34.

⁶² Boff, p. 35. He adds that “this was not the path chosen by God as witnessed in the gospels and by the Christian community since its early days” (p. 35). It is important to note here that Boff’s position on Joseph and Mary’s “normal married life” represents a contradiction to the theology of Mary’s perpetual virginity held by some theologians and pastors.

⁶³ Tim Keller, “What is Biblical Justice,” from *Relevant Magazine*, accessed from <http://www.relevantmagazine.com/god/practical-faith/what-biblical-justice>. p. 2.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p. 3.

⁶⁶ Boff. p. 39.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. 40.

⁶⁹ Richard Rohr, in *The Divine Dance: Exploring the Mystery of Trinity* (Albuquerque, NM: The Center for Action and Contemplation, 2004), on Track 3 of the first of four CDs, states that our knowledge of Trinity is gained in a *participatory* way in contrast to a way in which one is given the knowledge by someone – a teacher, cleric, even the Pope – who has the correct definition of Trinity. Of course, the knowledge is not going to be similar to the knowledge one has when explaining what is any object within our reality, because God is completely transcendental or God is completely Other. All of reality, he states, in some way reflects the Trinity. Here in this synthesis, the closest reflection of Trinity is the Holy Family.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 40.

⁷¹ From the Introduction to the Acts of the Apostles, in *The Catholic Faith & Family Bible, The New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition*. (New York: Harper Catholic Bibles, An imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2010), p. 1352.

⁷² Maria Harris, *Fashion Me a People* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), p. 21.

⁷³ Richard J. Reichert, *Renewing Catechetical Ministry* (New York, Mahway, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2002), p. 40.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 45.

⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 47. Reichert underlines the importance of developing these contemplative skills within religious formation. The developing or nurturing of the “inner monk” has to be intentional.

⁷⁶ Thomas H. Groome, “Total Catechesis/Religious Education: A Vision for Now and Always,” in *Horizons and Hopes: The Future of Religious Education*, ed. Thomas H. Groome and Daly Horrel (New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2003), pp. 18-19.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Harris, pp. 75-167.

⁷⁹ Groome, p. 20.

⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 21.

⁸¹ Louis Zamperini, in the movie *Unbroken*, recalled the *sacred moment* [for me, at least, looking through the lens of family catechesis] of his mother preparing gnocchi, in his most difficult moment as a prisoner of war. Spanish-speaking immigrants yearn for those sacred moments of shared meals (prepared with love and care by mothers and fathers) that are becoming less and less frequent in this culture. The “yearning” is for communion and when it occurs among believers, it is a strong symbol/sign of the Holy Spirit/Love of the Trinity, according to St. Basil (from Hosffnan Ospino, “Hope and Fire: Catechetical Insights on the Holy Spirit,” presentation at the 2014 Los Angeles Religious Education Congress, available from CSC Digital Media, Simi Valley, CA).

⁸² This small faith community, if lived purposely, has the potential to replace the extended family and the immediate community (village, barrio) that is lacking in Spanish-speaking immigrant families in the Antelope Valley. Here, a more thorough sociological and anthropological study is needed to highlight the needs of these people.

⁸³ Most people would agree that this has always been a need. This is one of the motivating factors for the primary interest the bishops of the world have today in the family. Books on evangelizing baptized Catholics have been on shelves for years. St. John Paul stated that this is an important area of the New Evangelization. A textbook that would be required reading for lead couples, along with the *Biblia Católica de la Familia*, is *Cómo evangelizar a los bautizados* by Jose H. Prado Flores (Mexico: Publicaciones KERYGMA, 1994). There are many good books on the practical aspects of evangelization but unfortunately, most have not been translated to Spanish. Church documents cited above are in Spanish and also *La catequesis familiar en los documentos de la*

Iglesia (Lima: Oficina Nacional de la Catequesis Familiar, 2002) has a very complete list of resources, from Scripture, Church Fathers, contemporary teachings of the Church and papal documents.

⁸⁴ Edward P. Hahnenberg, *Ministries, A Relational Approach* (New York: A Herder & Herder Book, The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* page 4.

⁸⁶ *Lumen Gentium*, no. 10.

⁸⁷ Hahnenberg, p. 32.

⁸⁸ *Lumen Gentium*, no. 4, cited in Hahnenberg, p. 33.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 2: English translation from *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott (New York: Guild Press, 1966), 535, cited by Hahnenberg, p. 82.

⁹¹ Hahnenberg, p. 83.

⁹² Yves Congar, "My Path-Findings in the Theology of Laity and Ministries," *The Jurist* 32 (1972): 176, cited in Hahnenberg, p. 9.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Thomas F. O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, rev.ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1999) 10; see 163, cited in Hahnenberg, p. 9.

⁹⁵ It is obvious that the family has always been dysfunctional due to our flawed nature, but it is incumbent on all to focus more on the family. Some seem to be very concerned about the lack of priestly vocations and some see this as prelude to a complete breakdown of the church. But this cross may be a gift which makes us all aware that we all participate in building up the kingdom and doing God's will. Also, priestly and religious vocations come from the family and an underlying belief of family catechesis is "if you build or rebuild it (family), they will come."

⁹⁶ Richard P. O'Brien, "The Future of the Church and Its Ministries: Imperatives for the Twenty-First Century," *New Theology Review* 6 (1993): 43-52, cited in Hahnenberg, p. 31.

⁹⁷ Thomas H. Groome, *Will There Be Faith*. (New York: HarperOne, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2011) p. 22.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 22-23.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon, in their book *Urgings of the Heart* (New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1995), explore obstacles which can hinder our ability to serve others or relate to others in a Christ-like manner. They place many of these obstacles or hidden tendencies or inclinations (codependency, perfectionism, envy, overwork) under the umbrella of the shadow self. They see the need for constant discernment and shadow work, accompanied by therapists, counselors or spiritual directors, if needed.

¹⁰² Ronald Rolheiser, *The Shattered Lantern* (New York: A Crossroad Book, The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2004). This is the subtitle on the cover and it synthesizes what is a major obstacle to belief in Christ.

¹⁰³ Groome, p. 29.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 32.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 31.

¹⁰⁶ David L. Fleming, S.J., *Draw Me Into Your Friendship, The Spiritual Exercises, A Literal Translation & Contemporary Reading* (Saint Louis: The institute of Jesuit Sources, 1996) p. 27.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 29.

¹⁰⁸ Fr. Luke Dysinger, O.S.B., *Accepting the Embrace of God: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina*. (Valyermo, CA: St. Andrew's Abbey, 1998), p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ I am using "sacrament" in a wide sense as stated by Charlene Altemose, MSC, in her booklet *What You Should Know About the Sacraments* (Liguori, MO: Liguori, 1994): "Broadly speaking, any person, place, or thing that draws us to God or is a sign of God's presence and redemptive love is 'sacrament,'" p. 7.

¹¹⁰ St. John Paul II, *The Church in America, Ecclesia en America* (Washington, D.C.: USCCB, 1999), no. 39, cited in *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, p. 28.

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