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MASTER OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES HONORS THESES

Shaped by Love: Family Catechesis and the Crisis of Disaffiliation in the Catholic Church

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Abstract

There is currently a crisis of disaffiliation within the Catholic Church, particularly among youth and young adults. One of the proposed solutions for the crisis of disaffiliation is implementing the family catechesis model at the parish level as a means of effectively transmitting the Catholic faith. This paper examines the data of two studies: Going, Going, Gone: The Dynamics of Disaffiliation in Young Catholics conducted by St. Mary's Press and Ask Your Father and He Will Tell You: A Report on American Catholic Religious Parenting produced by the McGrath Institute in order to discern if the conditions that lead to the effective transmission of the Catholic Faith can also counteract the factors that lead to disaffiliation. In addition, the ways in which sacred scripture, the model of family catechesis in the early church, the evolution of catechetical best practice, and modern church teachings support family catechesis are identified. The family catechetical model is then analyzed to determine if it is prepared to nurture households that effectively transmit the faith as identified by the McGrath Institute and to address the factors that lead to disaffiliation as put forth by the Going, Going, Gone Survey. Finally, the development, implementation, assessment, and analysis of the family catechetical model at St. Raphael Parish in Oshkosh, Wisconsin is detailed in order to provide pastoral ministers with a guide of how to best address the factors that lead to disaffiliation by supporting and equipping parents as the primary evangelizers of their children.

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last few months, a new wave of clerical sexual abuse revelations left the world in shock. From Australia to Chile to Germany to the United States, horrifying reports revealed thousands of cases of child molestation by members of the clergy. The church is bitterly divided between progressive and conservative wings. This split is particularly pronounced in the United States, where highly mobilized, neo-traditionalist Catholics took up Vigano's call for Francis' resignation. This branch of the church already feared that Francis presented a progressive threat to church teachings on marriage and sexuality.