

**MAKERERE**



**UNIVERSITY**

**THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY AS THE FIRST SCHOOL OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION  
IN LACOR PARISH IN THE LIGHT OF *ECCLESIA IN AFRICA***

**BY**

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## ABSTRACT

The topic of this research work is the role of the family as the first school of Christian initiation in Lacor Parish. In the view of John Paul II in *Ecclesia in Africa* (1995, no. 92), he affirms that the family plays a major role as the first school of Christian initiation, he says: “It is here that the father of the family, the mother, children, and all members of the family exercise the priesthood of the baptized in a privileged way by the reception of the sacraments, prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life and self-denial and active charity. Thus *the home is the first school of Christian life* and a school for human enrichment.”

Expressing the importance and necessity of the family, the Vicar of Christ explained that the future of the world and of the Church passes through the family, and that the Christian family is the first cell of the living ecclesial community as well as the fundamental cell of society. Furthermore, referring to Africa in particular, the Pontiff stated that the family is the foundation on which the social structure is built. On the other hand, the Holy Father defines ‘Christian initiation’ as those instructions we receive as we begin to understand the life of Jesus and to follow the teaching of the Gospel so as to become his (Jesus’) true follower (John Paul II 1995, nn. 80 and 81).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2001, no. 1653) explains the role of parents to their children in a family setting. It observes that the fruitfulness of conjugal love extends to the fruits of the moral, spiritual and supernatural life that parents hand on to their children by education. Parents therefore become the principal and first educators of their children. Consequently, because the first (Christian) instructions are received from the parents, and moreover in a family locale, it suffices to say that the family is the first school of Christian initiation.

A family is irrefutably a central place for human existence. The First African Synod stressed the fact that the future of the Church is in the family. However, the family has become an object of numerous perplexities due to rapid challenges and forces of change. Among these challenges are single parenthood, domestic violence, family instabilities and poverty which appear to be distorting the very essence and notion of family. The necessity of the family seems to be misrepresented by lack of awareness of the roles of the family in the upbringing and education of children both in the social and Christian values. As such the number of young Christian

adherents and adults seriously practicing Christianity is almost constantly reducing in Lacor Parish. This research, therefore, is intended to explore the role of the family as an instrument of formation and evangelization to children, expose those factors which seem to threaten to distort that essential role of the family, and then suggest some possible solutions to those threats.

In reviewing the literature (chapter two) the researcher employed the teachings of *Ecclesia in Africa* (The Church in Africa), other papal documents, relevant works of authors in line with this research topic and the teachings of the Church on the role of the family in the proper upbringing of children. In chapter three of this research work, the research methods used included library research, questionnaire, mass observation, interview (personal and group), and telephone survey. The population sample size taken was 171 people. In the presentation and analysis of data (chapter four), it was recorded that 100% of the respondents agree that the family plays some role as the first school of Christian initiation, while 94% of the respondents assert that to a very great extent the family plays a role as the first school of Christian initiation.

In discussing the findings (chapter five), the researcher noted the following from the respondents: understanding of the concepts ‘family’ and ‘Christian initiation’ in Lacor Parish, the challenges faced by the family (modern media influence, passive environment, children’s rights, social and political instability, un-exemplary Church leaders, and unstable families), possible solutions to the challenges families face (community involvement, family catechesis and progressive education, revival of positive traditional values in families, and co-operation in ensuring morality in society).

In the final chapter (six), the researcher drew conclusions and came up with practical recommendations to restore the status and role of the family (the family/marriage is necessary because it derives from the plan of God, promotion of equality between man and woman, censoring the mass media/literature, catechesis for parents on their roles in the Christian initiation of their children, promotion of peace and stability, intensification of family outreach programs, carrying out youth apostolate), and finally came out with a general conclusion (though the family has been threatened by numerous factors, we ought to counteract these opposing factors and model our families on that of Joseph, Mary and Jesus in order they may remain the vital cell of the society and of the Church).