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The Trinity Model in The Family of Educators: Reflections on Love and Unity

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Abstract

The family serves as the primary and foundational place of education for Christians. It plays a crucial role in shaping values and nurturing relationships with God. This discussion focuses on the concept of the Triune God, which serves as a model for the family life of educators. Using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, the researcher aims to explore various aspects of educators' family life associated with the teachings of the Council of Nicaea. Just as the Father and the Son exist in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, families are also called to embody love, share, and cultivate close relationships. Additionally, the ideals of unity in diversity and self-giving reflect the nature of the Trinity within the family. This study seeks to illustrate how the family, regarded as a "Domestic Church" (Ecclesia Domestica), can mirror the love of the Triune God. Furthermore, the teachings of the Council of Nicaea hold significance in family life, demonstrating how families can exemplify the love and unity inherent in the Triune God.

Keywords

Triune God, Council of Nicaea, Educating Family, Ecclesia Domestica.

INTRODUCTION

The Council of Nicaea (325) was caused by the teachings of Arius which were considered heretical. Arius taught that Jesus Christ was not true God, but the highest first created being. This meant that the Son was not eternal like the Father, the Son was lower than the Father, and the Son was created by the Father.[1] Arius' teachings were considered heretical because they contradicted the Christian faith which states that Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man. He is of one essence with the father, not a creature, but one in the divine nature.[2] Arius' teachings caused great unrest in the Church and threatened the unity of the Christian faith. Finally, Emperor Constantine

[1] Kendall Davis, "Arius as a Figure in Church History," Grapho: Concordia Seminary Student Journal 4, no. 1 (April 15, 2022): Article 5, https://scholar.csl.edu/grapho/vol4/iss1/5.
[2] Catholic Church, Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), no. 465.

summoned more than 300 bishops from all over the Roman Empire to Nicaea (now Iznik, Turkey) to resolve this dispute.[3] After a process of theological debate, Arius' teachings were declared heretical. The council declared that the Son is "of one substance (homoousion) with the Father" and became the origin of the Nicene Creed.[4]

The Council of Nicaea (325) affirmed that the God we believe in is one, but exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[5] Although the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have different roles in the history of salvation, they are not separate from each other. They always work together in the unity of divine love and will. No one person is superior to the others because they are one in love, one in will, and one in power.[6]

The Trinity is an inseparable unity. Understanding the concept of the Trinity can begin with faith in Jesus Christ who lived, died, and rose. Faith in Jesus Christ means opening the door to divine life. In Jesus, the Word who became flesh (John 1:1-14), He revealed himself completely and approached humanity with saving love.[7]Faith in Jesus is not just an understanding in the intellectual realm but a life involvement full of trust and surrender. Through His cross and resurrection Jesus opened the way of salvation, freeing humanity from sin, and inviting every person to enter into a relationship with the living God.

After believing in the living, dead, and risen Christ, the Holy Spirit begins to play a role in taking the place of life in every human being. The Holy Spirit is the third person in the Trinity who is sent by the Father and the Son to live in the hearts of believers. The Holy Spirit is not only a power but also a comforter, helper, and sanctifier. Transformation by the Holy Spirit is a process of inner renewal that makes humans similar to Christ. In his letter to the church in Romans 12:2, Paul refers to it as spiritual “metamorphosis.”[8]

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[3] Bronwen Neil, "*Hosting the Council in Nicaea,*" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Council of Nicaea*, ed. Young Richard Kim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024), 95.

[4] Justo L. González, The Story of Christianity, Volume 1: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation (New York: Harper One, 2010), 167–172.

[5] Catholic Church, Catechism of the Catholic Church, accessed April 3, 2025, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/__P1A.HTM.

[6] Catholic Church, Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), no. 253–256.

[7] Indonesian Bible Society, Bible: New Translation (Jakarta: Indonesian Bible Society, 2002), John 1:1–14.

[8] Indonesian Bible Society, Romans 12:2.

Salvation does not just stop at faith or transformation but reuniting with God the Father, the source of all love. Jesus in his prayer asked, "that they may all be one, just as You, Father, are in Me and I in You... so that the world may know that You have sent Me (John 17:21).[9] Union with the Father is not only a promise in the heavenly life but a reality experienced by humans on this earth in a deep spiritual life. This is the highest calling of humans, namely to be children of God who live in the communion of love with the Most Holy Trinity.

John Paul II in the Familiaris Consortio document emphasized that the family is the domestic church (Ecclesia Domestica) and has a very important role in spreading Christian values. In the perspective of the family, Familiaris Consortio emphasizes that the family is a place for the growth of faith, moral education, and a culture of love. Parents are the main and first educators, so the education of children is the main task for parents.[10]

This article seeks to examine in depth how the Trinity model can be experienced and realized in the family life of educators. Using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, the researcher explores the experiences and reflections of educator families in building love, unity, and self-giving in their daily lives. This study seeks to emphasize that the family as a "Domestic Church" is called to be a real reflection of the love and unity of the Triune God in the midst of this challenging world.

METHOD

This article aims to examine in depth how the Trinity model can be experienced and realized in the family life of educators. Using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, the researcher explores the experiences and reflections of educator families in building love, unity, and self-giving in their daily lives. IPA is a qualitative approach in research used to understand how individuals experience and give meaning to a phenomenon in their lives.[11] This approach is rooted in the philosophy of phenomenology, hermeneutics (the science of interpretation), and ideography (an approach that emphasizes individual

[9] Indonesian Bible Society John 17:21.

[10] John Paul II. Familiaris Consortio. Apostolic Exhortation, Vatican, 1981.

[11] Jonathan A. Smith, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research (London: SAGE Publications, 2009), 3–5.

experience in depth).[12] This research seeks to emphasize that the family as a "Domestic Church" is called to be a real reflection of the love and unity of the Triune God in the midst of this challenging world.[13]

FAMILIARIS CONSORTIO AND THE UNITY OF THE TRINITY IN THE EDUCATOR FAMILY AT URSULINE SCHOOL

God is living love, a love that is never selfish. In the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we see the picture of perfect love: loving one another without ceasing, giving ourselves to one another, listening to one another, and always united in one heart and purpose. This is the Trinity: love living in perfect relationship.[14]

God created human beings in his image, male and female, and called them to experience the unity of love, which is a reflection of God's own love."[15]. That means God wants us to live in that kind of love to a love that gives to one another, understands one another, and produces goodness. And the first place where that love can be seen is in the family.

In the family, husband and wife are called to love each other as the father and Son love each other. From that love children are born, as the fruit of God's abundant love. Parents and children learn to listen, cooperate, and share, all of which reflect the life of God himself.[16]

Pope John Paul II in Familiaris Consortio affirmed that "the family is called to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which it radiates."[17] The family is not only a recipient of the faith, but also an active messenger in the life of the Church and society. In the same document, he also states that love in the family should reflect Christ's love for the Church a total, faithful and sacrificial love.[18]

[12] Carla Willig and Wendy Stainton Rogers, eds., The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology, 2nd edition (London: SAGE Publications, 2017), 27–30.

[13] Pope John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, No. 21.

[14] Catechism of the Catholic Church (Jakarta: Obor, 2001), No. 253–256

[15] Bible, Genesis 1:27 (ESV).

[16] Pope Francis, Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love) (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2016), No. 29–32.

[17] Pope John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, no. 39.

[18] Pope John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, no. 22

The Ursuline Educating Family As A Model Of The Trinity

The God we believe in is the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Three distinct persons, but one in love and one in purpose. They live in a unity of love, giving to each other and complementing each other.[19] This is what is called a relationship of unity in love, without losing the uniqueness of each. Such love can also be seen in the family. Husband and wife love each other, and from that love the lives of children are born. A family is not just living in one house, but living in real love in cooperation, understanding, forgiveness, and joy.[20]

The Holy Trinity is one God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three live in love and give themselves to each other. This is the basis of true service: the Father sent his Son into the world because of his love for humanity.[21]Jesus obeyed and served, even willing to die for our salvation.[22] The Holy Spirit gives us the strength and enthusiasm to serve like Jesus.[23]

Schools, especially Catholic schools like Ursuline, are not just places of learning, but living educational communities. In them there are teachers, students, and also parents. Each has a different role, but all are called to one goal: to form children into whole and loving individuals.[24] When families and schools work together, trusting each other, supporting each other, and strengthening each other, they become one body, like the Trinity. They become a reflection of God's love in the world of education. It doesn't mean that everything is always easy or perfect, but with love as the foundation, everything can run in beautiful unity. So, when families and schools embrace each other, they are not only educating children, but they are also presenting the face of God who is full of love in the midst of the world.

Ursuline School has the motto “Serviam” which means “I Will Serve.”[25] These are not just words, but a decision from a heart full of love. When someone says "Serviam,"

[19] Catechism of the Catholic Church (Jakarta: Obor, 2001), no. 253–256.

[20] John Paul II. Familiaris Consortio, No. 21-22

[21] John 3:16 (ESV)

[22] Philippians 2:8 (ESV)

[23] Acts 1: 8 (KJV); Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 683-686.

[24] Congregation for Catholic Education, The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), no. 18.

[25] Santa Ursula School Logo and Its Meaning, SMA Santa Ursula Jakarta, accessed April 7, 2025, http://santaursulajakarta.sch.id/sma/index.php/page/logo-school-santa-ursula-dan-artinya.

it is like saying, "I want to give myself for others, as Jesus gave himself for us.[26]" Church documents such as the Familiaris Consortio (FC) say that the family is the first place where love and service are taught. This means that the spirit of "Serviam" should start at home, and be strengthened in schools and the community.[27]

Dynamics of Family Life of Educators in Implementing The Values of Love and Unity

In a family that acts as an educator, the learning atmosphere does not only occur at school, but also flows in everyday family life.[28] Awareness of the importance of a Catholic environment is a strong foundation for this family to apply the values of faith and love in relationships between family members.[29] They are grateful to be in a Catholic school ecosystem that indirectly shapes their perspective and way of life in educating their children at home.[30]

As parents, they not only teach but also learn together in raising children.[31] This process is not always easy, but the effort to divide time between family and community becomes part of the process of growing together. This family involves children in daily family activities so that they can experience the values of life first-hand.[32] When shortcomings or mistakes occur, parents are there to direct and guide with love.[33]

The value of love is the spirit of this family life, which is reflected in the relationship pattern of the Trinity of loving one another, serving one another, and being united.[34] They are accustomed to pray together, telling stories to strengthen each other, and discussing how to deal with life's challenges. Although there are often differences in principles between husband and wife, they still try to accept each other

[26] Congregation of the Ursulines of Rome, Constitutions of the Ursulines of the Roman Union, (Rome: Curia Generalizia, 2002), article on "Serviam."
[27] John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, no. 37
[28] Pope John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, no. 36
[29] Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2223
[30] Congregation for Catholic Education, The Catholic School, no. 26
[31] Pope Francis, Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love) (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2016), no. 282.
[32] Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1657
[33] John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, no. 37
[34] Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2205

and learn to understand each other.[35] Verbal communication is sometimes not the only way to express love, because real actions are often the strongest love language.[36]

In the midst of this togetherness, concerns also arise about the future of children, especially when children choose to keep their difficulties to themselves and not share them with their parents.[37] For that reason, this family continues to in still good values through daily habits, with the hope that the children can apply them in their own lives later. They learn to be grateful for what they have and not compare themselves to other families.

However, this family is not free from challenges. Differences in parenting styles between husband and wife often cause tension.[38] Fatigue due to busyness makes it difficult to participate in environmental activities, especially if the timing is not right. The existence of social media such as mobile phones is also a distraction that disrupts family togetherness.[39] Apart from that, lack of patience and disloyalty to mutual commitments are challenges in maintaining family harmony.[40]

Analysis

1. This study shows that the educational family makes the values of love, unity, and service as the main foundation in family life. These values are very much in line with the spirit of Catholic spirituality, especially in shaping children's character and strengthening family ties. Council of Nicaea emphasized love as the essence of the Triune God. This love is not merely emotional, but springs from the unity of the divine essence that binds the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In the family of educators, love also becomes a force that enables them to remain together even in the face of conflict. This is a concrete expression of the faith instilled by the Church through her basic teachings.
2. The family is the first and foremost place of education, as recognized in Church documents. Children's involvement in family activities and the instillation of positive values are concrete forms of ongoing informal education at home.

[35] Pope Francis, Amoris Laetitia, no. 136.
[36] Ibid., no. 94.
[37] Ibid., no. 259.
[38] Ibid, no 233
[39] Ibid., no. 278.
[40] John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, no. 6

3. The relationship pattern reflected in this family resembles the Trinity model, namely sharing, serving each other, and uniting in prayer and communication. This shows a deep understanding of spirituality that is lived in everyday life. The family is depicted as a reflection of the Trinitarian relationship, which is central to the teaching of the Council of Nicaea. The Trinity lives in perfect unity, love, and communion and this is reflected in the educational family which seeks to live in love, mutual service, and cooperation. As in the Trinity, no one is dominant, but each person has a role in love and unity.
4. This study also reveals concrete challenges in today's family life, such as differences in parenting styles, time constraints, social media, and consistency in commitment. This shows that even though noble values have been embedded, their implementation still requires continuous struggle and reflection.
5. There is concern about how children will face the future, especially regarding openness in communication. This shows that there is awareness among parents about the importance of building safe and supportive communication for children.

CONCLUSION

The Trinity model raised in this article can be an inspiration for the family life of educators, especially in the context of Catholic schools such as Ursuline schools. In the Triune God there is unity of love, fellowship, and mutual giving. Likewise, families are called to be concrete reflections of this divine love. By making the values of love, unity, and service the foundation of family life, the family of educators will not only become a place for the growth of faith and morals but also a living Domestic Church (Ecclesia Domestica).

The Council of Nicaea became a theological foundation for understanding the Divine unity that can be realized in daily life in Christian families. Despite facing various challenges of the times such as differences in parenting patterns, digital distractions, and relationship dynamics, educational families show that Evangelical values can still be lived through example, loving communication, and commitment to service. Thus, educational families not only teach their children faith, but also present the face of the Triune God in society.

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