

2019 St. John the Apostle, December 27

1. **Most of us, I think, looking back on our years lived at home**, can describe those years pretty well. They remain familiar, so familiar actually, that when someone marries, he or she often reintroduces much of that paradigm into the new community, natural or religious. **We pass on, more often than not, both the shadows and lights**, the good and bad habits, into the new life embraced.

2. **St. John, in his Epistle and Gospel, makes reference to a similar dynamism** but with the faith community in mind:

What the “we” of the original group of twelve **heard**,

what the “we” of the original eyewitnesses **saw**,

what the “we” of the original community **looked into**,

what that “we” of the original apostolic community **touched** – that original experience, so familiar to them, **John wants to pass on to us**.

3. **Perhaps, this year we struggled to define, in our formation program in the Seminary, what experience we were passing on**. Perhaps it was not evident in our words and actions and presence. In biblical terms, formation means passing on the Christian experience of eternal life! How can we pass on and reproduce in the students what that original group of twelve heard, saw, looked upon and touched, if we have not first separated in ourselves what is naturally received from our parents and what we consciously and intentionally receive in faith? Here is the vital distinction: **the Christian experience of eternal life is an experience of presence, communion, unity of the Three**.

4. **The goal of any Christian formation** is to pass on this intimate sense of the incarnate and risen life of Christ. Only charity, agape, can pass on agape! But it calls us to draw upon an experience of something more than the human life of parents: **the fellowship with the Father and the Son**.