

Family Catechesis:
Practices and Models of Family Catechesis & Implementing Family Catechesis in Parishes

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Conference Program

Session 1. Practices & Models

1. Importance of Families in Faith Formation
2. 2023 Family Survey Results
3. Four Models of Family Catechesis
4. Family Learning Process

Session 2. Implementing

1. Pathways to Family Catechesis
2. Group Discussion: What are you doing and what would you like to do?
3. Reporting
4. Planning for Family Catechesis




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Importance of Families in Faith Formation

<p>#1. Parents are <u>the</u> most significant influence on the religious and spiritual outcomes of young people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • faith and practice • close and warm relationship • modeling & teaching • involvement in church life 	<p>#2. The primary way by which a religious identity becomes rooted in children's lives are the day-to-day religious practices of the family and the ways parents model their faith and share it in conversation, collaboration, and exposure to outside religious opportunities.</p>	<p>#3. The family is the primary community where Christian faith practices are nurtured and practiced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praying • Serving • Reading the Bible • Talking about faith • Providing moral instruction • Celebrating 	<p>4. The quality of a parent's relationships with their children or teens and the parenting style they practice make a significant difference in faith transmission.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm relationships • Religious firmness and flexibility • Talking about religious matters • Listening more, preaching less • Authoritative parenting
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2023 Family Faith Formation Survey

How effectively does your church implement the following practices:

1. Our church provides families with resources to nurture growth in Christian faith and practice at home. (3.11)
2. Our church provides experiences for the whole family that promote growth in faith and discipleship. (3.08)
3. Our church teaches parents the practices for forming faith at home (celebrating rituals and milestones, praying, serving, learning the Christian faith, reading the Bible) (2.91)
4. Our church helps parents (or caregivers) grow in faith and discipleship, and practice a vital and informed Christian faith. (2.90)

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2023 Family Faith Formation Survey

How effectively does your church implement the following practices:

5. Our church connects with families at home through social media and a website with content for family faith practices and parent formation. (2.83)
6. Our church helps grandparents grow in faith and discipleship, and practice a vital and informed Christian faith. (2.38)
7. Our church equips parents with the knowledge and skills for parenting today. (2.28)
8. Our church teaches grandparents the practices for forming faith at home. (2.22)

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2023 Family Faith Formation Survey

Types of family faith formation programming offered:

1. Family-centered sacramental preparation programs (197)
2. Family large group programs at church (monthly or seasonal) (178)
3. At-home family activities (Bible reading, prayers, devotions, rituals, service, etc.) (165)
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4. Online resources and courses for parents (99)
5. Family service projects and/or mission trips (88)
6. Parent workshops (84)
7. Family cluster or small group programs (57)
8. Family-centered lectionary-based Scripture reflection (49)

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2023 Family Faith Formation Survey

Types of family faith formation programming offered:

- ✓ Family-centered vacation Bible school (38)
- ✓ Family retreats and camps (21)
- ✓ Mentoring for parents (21)
- ✓ Family Bible study (13)
- ✓ Parent webinars (online) (12)
- ✓ Grandparent workshops or webinars (10)

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2023 Family Faith Formation Survey

Topics of family faith formation (top responses):

1. Sacraments and Mass
2. Church year seasons
3. Prayer
4. Beliefs
5. Church
6. Saints
7. Scripture

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Family Learning Process

1. A shared meal
2. Shared prayer experience
3. A whole family learning experience on the topic of the program with content and methods appropriate to an all-ages audience
4. In-depth learning
 - a) whole family learning together with activities appropriate to all ages
 - b) parallel learning with learning activities for age groups and parents
 - c) learning activity centers with whole family and age-specific learning
5. A closing whole family activity to discover how to apply their learning to daily life using resources and activities provided in print or digital formats.

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Four Models of Family Faith Formation

Primary Model for Catechesis Families with children through middle school Monthly Twice monthly Weekly	Family Catechesis within an Intergenerational Model	Seasonal Family Catechesis Gatherings Church Year Seasons: Advent, Lent Fall - Winter - Spring	Sacramental Preparation First Eucharist First Reconciliation
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Family Catechesis Model

Church of the Holy Spirit, East Greenbush NY

- ✓ 2 tracks: young families & teens/adults
- ✓ Year-round with summer, fall, and spring schedules
- ✓ Church year is guide for content
- ✓ Draws from a multitude of resources
- ✓ Church Life nights once a month for young families
 - In-person and virtual options
 - Project assigned on Church Life Night
- ✓ Family Night later in month
- ✓ Families share projects on virtual platform
- ✓ Family retreats during Advent and Lent
- ✓ Summer season involves a family project

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Family Catechesis Model

Church of the Presentation, Upper Saddle River NJ

Grades 1 -8 and parents (and sometimes grandparents!) engage in. . .

- ✓ Weekly on-line lessons for families
- ✓ Monthly family learning sessions
 - Families choose from three schedule options
- ✓ Family Mass first Sunday of the month

Content. . .

- ✓ Staff draw from a variety of resources to design gatherings
- ✓ For December gathering, families chose a parish Advent activity
- ✓ January gathering is for parents only
- ✓ For March gathering, families choose a Holy Week service

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Family Catechesis Model

St. Agnes & St. Camillus, Arlington, MA

No one size fits all. . .

- ✓ Year begins with individual parent visits
- ✓ Each year the plan is based on family needs and circumstances
- ✓ Family and staff together create a path for the household

Content . . .

- ✓ *Pathways* Program from Faith and Family Life Catholic Ministries
 - <https://www.fflcm.org/home>
- ✓ Modules vary in length
- ✓ Combination of:
 - At-home components
 - Parish gatherings
 - Village (family small group) gatherings

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Family Catechesis within Intergenerational Model

St. Cecilia, St. Paul, MN

“Whole Community Worship” Model

- ✓ Meal
- ✓ Prayer and sharing
- ✓ Session

Utilizes *Fashioning Faith* from The Pastoral Center

Monthly Schedule. . .

- ✓ Two times a month break into small groups for classes
- ✓ Once a month all ages have a large group activity focused on
 - Prayer
 - Service
 - Community Building
 - Etc.

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Family Catechesis within Intergenerational Model

St. Joseph, West Milford, NJ

Generations of Faith Model

- ✓ Nine monthly gatherings for the whole parish
- ✓ Participants choose Sunday a.m. or Monday p.m.
- ✓ Variety of yearly topics

Content . . .

- ✓ Monthly gatherings
 - Planners draw from many sources
- ✓ Lifelong faith prioritized
 - Households encouraged to participate in parish life
 - Encouraged to build faith traditions and practices

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Family Catechesis within Intergenerational Model

Ss. John and Paul, Altoona, IA

Generations of Faith Model

- ✓ Monthly all-parish gathering
- ✓ Digital “home kit” for further growth
- ✓ Integrates parish activities and celebrations

Prioritizes Lifelong Growth in Faith. . .

- ✓ Youth ministry for grades 3-12 for further peer interaction
- ✓ Adult track for VBS among many AFF offerings
- ✓ Draws from varied resources
- ✓ Tracks comprehensive treatment of the faith

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Seasonal/Occasional Family Catechesis

St. Patrick and Columbanus Parish
Neola, IA

- ✓ Transitioning from traditional to intergenerational model
- ✓ Currently offering classroom learning three Sundays a month
- ✓ Families meet the second Sunday of each month
 - Mass
 - Food
 - Parents and children learning together

St. Charles Borromeo
Tacoma, WA

- ✓ Faith Fests three times a year
 - Previous themes: All Saints, Baptism, Pentecost, and Corpus Christi
 - This year: Good Shepherd, Word of God Sunday, and Marian Devotion/Rosary
- ✓ Prayer, ice breakers, a focus message, faith-sharing, breakout activities, and food
- ✓ Faith witnessing by parishioners as part of the program when applicable

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Family-Centered Sacramental Preparation

St. Margaret of Scotland,
Morristown, NJ

- ✓ First Communion and Confirmation prep engage families
- ✓ In-person sessions offered every weekend, with wrap-up twice a year
- ✓ Written texts and digital platforms offered so students and their families can access more interactive learning

Old St. Mary's
Chicago, IL

- ✓ Family-centered model for all families monthly
 - 5-7 learning centers; families move at their own pace
- ✓ Sacramental prep for second graders done by parents
 - 4 prep sessions for parents
 - At-home resources for parents to use to prepare children for the sacrament

St. Mark
Westminster, CO

- ✓ Sessions are parent-led, catechist-facilitated
- ✓ Families learn in groups
- ✓ Includes digital resources from Loyola Press which offer families engaging ways to do faith formation at home

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Conference Program

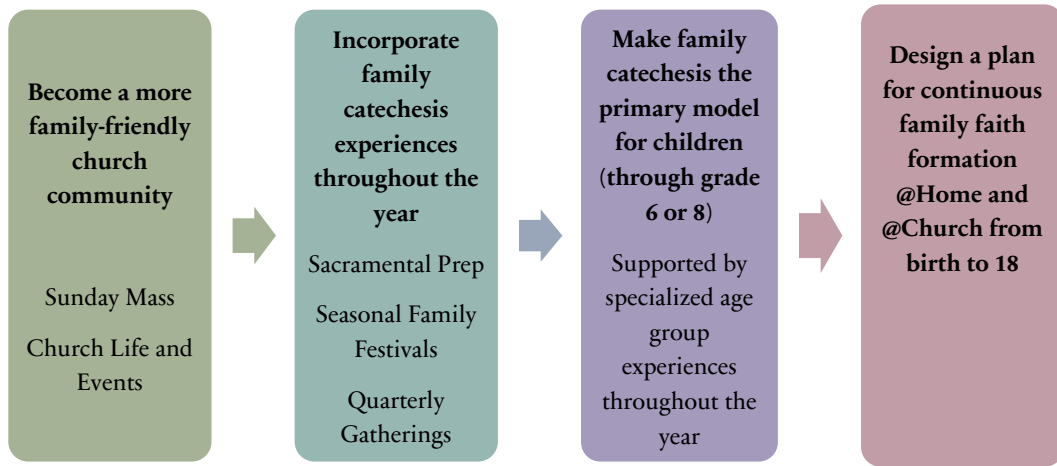
Session 2

1. Pathways to Family Catechesis
2. Group Discussion: What are you doing and what would you like to do?
3. Reporting
4. New Ideas for Family Catechesis



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Pathways to Deeper Family Faith Formation



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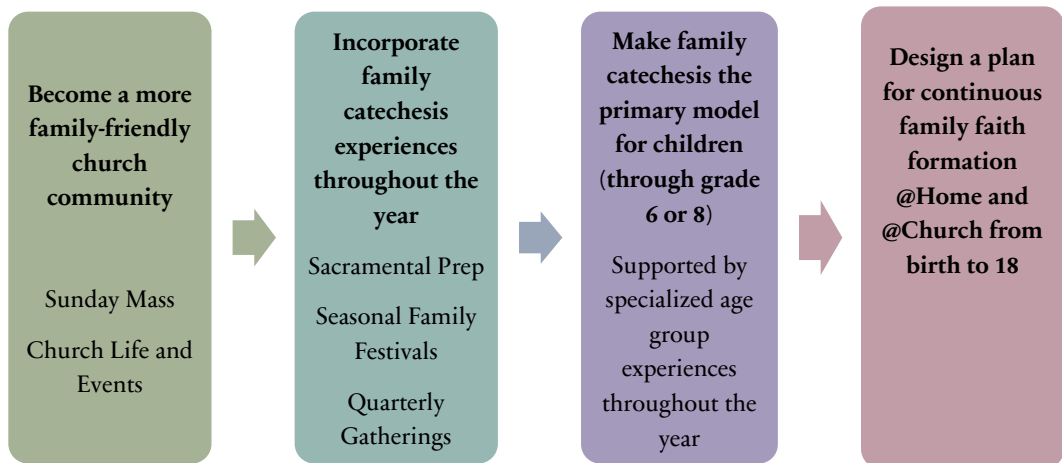
Group Discussion

1. Thinking about what your parish is currently doing:
 - ❖ How are you engaging the whole family in catechetical experiences?
 - ❖ How are you promoting parental growth in faith?

2. Thinking about the future:
 - ❖ What can you (your parish) do to engage the whole family in catechetical experiences?
 - ❖ What can you (your parish) do to promote the growth in faith of parents?

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Pathways to Deeper Family Faith Formation



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Developing a Plan for Family Catechesis

First Step Ideas. . . .

- Offer an Advent, Lent, and/or Pentecost Family Festival
- Re-design sacramental preparation sessions from child-only to parent-child family catechesis experiences
- Incorporate parents (and grandparents) into the Vacation Bible School, e.g., 1 or 2 evening whole family sessions – dinner and activities

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Developing a Plan for Family Catechesis

Expanding Ideas. . . .

- Add a whole family catechesis session – every 6 weeks - into your children’s program on one of the core themes in the curriculum
- Offer a Fall – Winter – Spring Family Workshop on family life skills applicable to the whole family (children and teens)
- Design a VBS experience for the whole family
- Design a family service experience for the whole family

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Developing a Plan for Family Catechesis

Transforming Ideas. . . .

- Implement a family catechesis model as the primary model for children’s catechesis
 - Large group gathering at church and/or family clusters of 6-10 families in homes
 - Hybrid: @church, @home, @online
 - Weekly, Twice-Monthly, Monthly
 - Content: Scripture, Creed, Sacraments, Morality, Prayer, Church Year Seasons, Christian Practices, and more

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Family Catechesis: Hybrid Approaches

Week #1. Family Session and Gathering @ Church (2+ hours)

Week #2. @ Home Faith Formation (Online)

Week #3. Age Group Learning (children and parents) @ Church

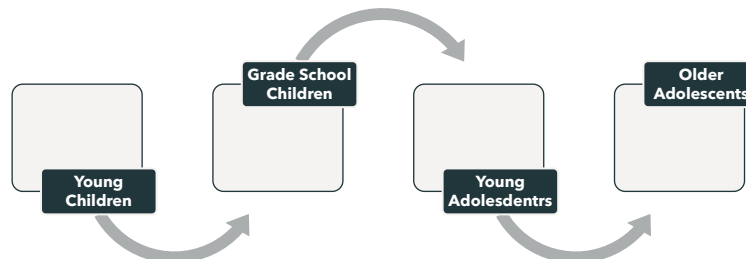
Week #4. @ Home Faith Formation (Online)

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Developing a Plan for Family Catechesis

Systemic Idea. . . .

a continuous plan to accompany families from birth to 18 in four stages - young children, grade school children, young adolescents, older adolescents – with faith forming experiences for families and parents at church, at home, online, in large groups and small groups



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Creating a Plan

- ✓ **Short-Term Planning** – ideas that can be integrated into existing programs or can be designed and implemented in one year
- ✓ **Mid-Term Planning** – ideas that need more design time and that can be implemented within one or two years
- ✓ **Long-Term Planning** – ideas that need design time, piloting and testing, and then implementation over several years

