



# NCCL

National Community of  
Catechetical Leaders

## 2023 Family and Intergenerational Faith Formation Survey: Catholic Results

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In the Spring of 2023, NCCL conducted a national survey to identify how well Catholic parishes are implementing practices of family faith formation and intergenerational (all ages together) faith formation. A total of **303** Catholic parishes completed the survey.

This is the first report of the survey findings. The second phase of the research will include reports on the parishes that are offering family and/or intergenerational faith formation programming. These reports will be available beginning in September 2023 on the NCCL website: <https://www.ncclcatholic.org>.

### Part 1. Who Participated in the Survey

This section tells you about the parishes who completed the survey. The parishes represent a good mix of urban, suburban, and small town or rural. The parishes reflect a wide diversity of size as identified by average weekly Mass attendance. There are 86 parishes with 500 or fewer people weekly at Mass; and there are 66 parishes with 2000 or more people weekly at Mass. The 303 parishes are ethnically diverse with a membership that has at least 10% or more members from Hispanic or Latino, African American and African National or Caribbean, Filipino or Pacific Islander, and/or Asian-American communities.

#### 1. Who completed the survey?

1. Faith Formation Coordinator (Full Time)	160	(52.81%)
2. Faith Formation Coordinator (Part Time)	63	(20.79%)
3. Faith Formation Coordinator (Volunteer)	23	(7.59%)
4. Youth Minister	8	(2.64%)
5. Pastor	5	(1.65%)
6. Children's Ministry Leader	3	(.99%)
7. Other Church Leadership Position	41	(13.53%)

#### 2. Where are the parishes located?

• Urban	74	(24.42%)
• Suburban	137	(45.21%)
• Small Town or Rural	92	(30.36%)

### 3. What is your average weekly Mass attendance?

- 50 or less 2 parishes
- 50-100 6
- 101-250 27
- 251-500 51
- 501-1000 68
- 1001-1500 53
- 1501-2000 30
- 2001-2500 18
- 2501-3000 14
- 3001+ 34

### 4. Which ethnic groups form at least 10% of your parish community?

*(Number of parish responses for each ethnic group.)*

- White/European 295 parishes
- Hispanic or Latino 230
- African-American 164
- Filipino/Pacific Islander 154
- Asian-American 138
- African National/African-Caribbean 63
- Arab/Middle Eastern 45
- American Indian/Alaska Native 27
- Other Ethnic Groups 25

## Part 2. Catholic Family Faith Formation

The survey asked parishes to rate eight practices in family faith formation. The top three responses include providing families with resources, whole family experiences at church, and teaching and supporting parents. The second question asked about the type of family programming their parish offers. The top three responses were family sacramental preparation programs, family programs at church, and at-home family activities.

### 5. Family Faith Formation in Catholic Parishes

*Please rate how effectively your church implements the following practices in family faith formation. (Ranked in order from strongly disagree to strongly agree. 5 = highest score)*

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

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

## 6. Types of Family Faith Formation Programming Offered by Catholic Parishes

*(Ranked in order. Parishes can respond multiple times.)*

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
4. Online resources and courses for parents	99
5. Family service projects and/or mission trips	88
6. Parent workshops	84
7. Family cluster o[r] small group programs	57
8. Family-centered lectionary-based Scripture reflection	49
9. Family-centered vacation Bible school	38
10. Family retreats and camps	21
11. Mentoring for parents	21
12. Family Bible study	13
13. Parent webinars (online)	12
14. Grandparent workshops or webinars	10
Do Not Offer Family Programming	59

## 7. Frequency and Topics of Family Faith Formation Programming

*(Responses from the 177 parishes engaged in family faith formation programming.)*

### Frequency (top responses)

#1. Monthly	105 parishes
#2. Weekly	26
#3. Twice a month	12
#3. Several times a year	11

### Topics (top responses)

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

## Part 3. Catholic Intergenerational Faith Formation

The survey asked parishes to rate nine practices in intergenerational faith formation. The top two responses (Sunday Mass) describe settings that are more **multi-generational** (multiple generations gathered together) than **intergenerational**. When we speak of intergenerational we mean an **intentional** approach or strategy to engage people with other generations: building relationships, learning together, sharing stories, praying with each other, serving together, and more. Sunday Mass has the potential for becoming much more intentionally intergenerational when the generations have the opportunity to

interact in meaningful ways. The responses to the next top responses – items #3, 4, 5 – point to activities that are more intentionally intergenerational.

The second question asked about the type of intergenerational programming their parish offers. The top responses were seasonal or occasional intergenerational programs, followed by intergenerational service projects, and monthly intergenerational learning.

### **8. Intergenerational (All Ages Together) Faith Formation in Catholic Parishes**

*Please rate how effectively your church implements the following practices in intergenerational ministry and faith formation. Ranked in order from strongly disagree to strongly agree. 5 = highest score)*

1. Our church brings all generations together in Sunday/weekend worship, including children and youth.	3.27
2. Our church engages all generations in leadership roles in Sunday worship (music, reading, praying, etc.)	2.71
3. Our church builds caring relationships among the generations through existing church ministries and events (e.g., through worship, learning, service, and community events and activities).	2.54
4. Our church regularly brings all generations together in actions that serve the poor and vulnerable, locally, and globally.	2.46
5. Our church creates intentional opportunities for bringing the generations together to build relationships and engage in shared activities.	2.44
6. Our church regularly brings together all generations to nurture their spiritual life through prayer and spiritual practices and disciplines.	2.17
7. Our church regularly brings all generations together for learning programs and activities that teach the Bible and the Christian tradition.	2.13
8. Our church regularly brings all generations together in actions that promote justice and advocacy, locally and globally.	2.06
9. Our church regularly brings together the generations to learn from each other, share their faith stories, and find support for practicing their faith in daily life.	1.90

### **9. Types of Intergenerational Faith Formation Programming Offered by Catholic Parishes**

*(Ranked in order. Parishes can respond multiple times.)*

1. Seasonal/occasional intergenerational program	117
2. Intergenerational service projects or mission trips	51
3. Monthly intergenerational learning program	39
4. Intergenerational lectionary-based Scripture reflection	22
5. Weekly or bi-weekly intergenerational learning program	20
6. Small group intergenerational learning program	19
7. Intergenerational mentoring	14
8. Intergenerational Bible study	12
9. Intergenerational retreats or camps	10
Do not offer intergenerational programming	136

## 10. Most Popular Frequency and Topics of Intergenerational Faith Formation Programming

*(Responses from the 75 parishes engaged in intergenerational faith formation programming.)*

### Frequency (top responses)

#1. Monthly	26 parishes
#2. Several times a year	26
#2. Weekly	6
#4. Quarterly	6

### Topics (top responses)

#1. Sacraments and Mass
#2. Church year seasons
#3. Service
#4. Scripture
#5. Prayer

## Part 4. Challenges in Offering Family & Intergenerational Faith Formation

The final question asked about the challenges leaders faced in offering family or intergenerational faith formation. Nineteen responses surfaced repeatedly in the 486 individual responses to the question. They provide a good summary of what respondents identified as the challenges they are facing today.

### 11. What are two of the most significant challenges you and your church face in offering family or intergenerational faith formation? (Not in priority ranking)

1. Family participation at Sunday Mass and parish life
2. Family participation in family or intergenerational programming
3. Family schedules, busy lives, lots of activities
4. Getting families to make this a priority, to commit the time, to see the benefits
5. Availability of volunteers
6. Dedicated leaders committed to family and intergenerational faith formation
7. Support of the pastor
8. Educating the pastor and church leadership about the importance and benefits of family and intergenerational faith formation
9. Changing the paradigm from child-centered to family-centered faith formation
10. Finding the right length – long enough to be a well-rounded program and but not too long so that we keep people engaged and interested
11. Lack of adequate facilities for a large group of families or several generations
12. Parents lack of interest in their own faith growth and learning
13. Adult community lack of interest in continuing their growth in faith
14. Creating a program that adapts to the particular needs of each family and is not one-size-fits-all that may discourage some families from participating
15. Changes in parish structures and leadership with merging, consolidating, regionalizing
16. People's lack of prior experience with family or intergenerational faith formation. People are not aware of the benefits
17. The pull to go back to the weekly classroom model
18. Getting people to participate in intergenerational faith formation in the first years of implementation
19. Reaching out to families who are not participating in the family program