



The NCCL February Online Conference

February 15, 2023
Parent Faith Formation
Denise Utter

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Introductions

Denise Utter
*Engage Every Family:
A Parish Guide to Integrated
Faith Formation*

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What's Working?

1. In-Person Parent Gatherings (LG/SG/LG)
2. Online Parent Gatherings
3. A Hybrid Approach
4. Parent/Family Led Formation Plans
5. Integrated Faith Formation:
Home, Parish, & Community



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In-Person Parent Gatherings (LG/SG/LG)

- Easy "On-Ramps"
- Curriculum Focused
- Seasonally Focused
- Theme Focused
(Prayer, Keeping Sabbath, Reading the Bible, etc.)
- Led/Facilitated by...



"Enabling families to take up their role as active agents of the family apostolate calls for 'an effort at evangelization and catechesis inside the family.'" DFC #124

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Easy On- Ramps*

- Reimagined "First of the Year" Parent Meeting
- Baptism
- First Reconciliation
- First Communion
- Confirmation

The catechesis of parents whose children are making the journey of Christian initiation: "the community fosters the involvement of parents in their children's journey of initiation, which for some of them is a moment to deepen their faith and for others is an authentic space for its first proclamation." DFC #232

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Curriculum Focus on Children's Lessons

- Aligning Parent Formation with children's lessons
- Facilitation - LG / SG /LG
- Many lessons learned (like these below)
- Do not talk *at*
 - it's a dialogue, not a lecture
- Parents learn as much from each other as they do from us (if not more!) Allow conversation.
- Affirm, affirm, affirm!



*ex: SPY

The greatest challenge in this situation is for couples, mothers and fathers, active participants in catechesis, to overcome the mentality of delegation that is so common, according to which the faith is set aside for specialists in religious education. This mentality is, at times, fostered by communities that struggle to organize family centered catechesis which starts from the families themselves. DFC #124

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Seasonally Focused

- Advent
- Christmas
- Lent
- Holy Week
- Easter
- Pentecost
- Ordinary Time



The family is a proclamation of faith in that it is the natural place in which faith can be lived in a simple and spontaneous manner. DFC #227

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Theme Focused

- Prayer
- Reading the Bible
- Keeping Sabbath
- Spiritual & Corporal Works of Mercy
- Gifts of the Spirit & Fruits of the Spirit
- Catholic Social Teaching
- Other Christian Living Practices



As a domestic church... the Christian family takes part in the Church's mission of evangelization and is therefore an agent of catechesis. DFC #251

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Leaders

It doesn't have to be you!

- Catechetical leaders
- Pastors
- Deacons
- Ministry Leaders
- PARENTS
 - parent panels
 - parent led



(*NYC dad's story)

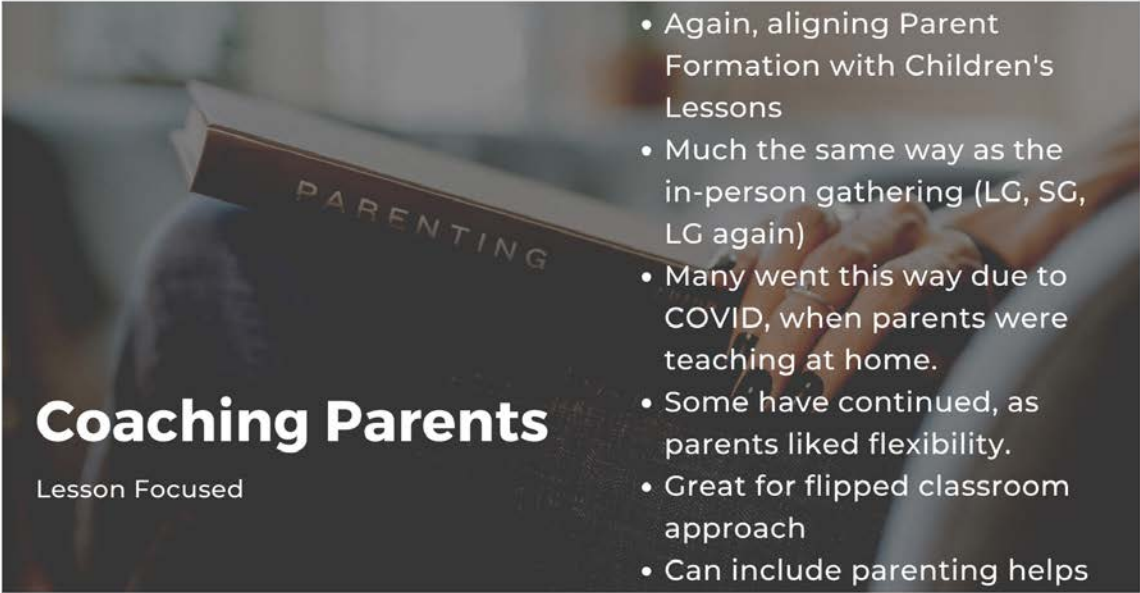
"Being a parent is dirty and scary and beautiful and hard and miraculous and exhausting and thankless and joyful and frustrating all at once. It's everything." (Smoker: Scary Mommy)

Online Parent/Family Gatherings

- Coaching Parents/
Lesson-Focused
- Small Group Focused;
More Parent Equip &
Support Style



In virtual space, which many consider no less important than the real world, people get news and information, develop and express opinions, engage in debate, dialogue, and seek answers to their questions. Failing adequately to consider these phenomena leads to the risk of appearing insignificant to many people. DFC #124



Coaching Parents

Lesson Focused

- Again, aligning Parent Formation with Children's Lessons
- Much the same way as the in-person gathering (LG, SG, LG again)
- Many went this way due to COVID, when parents were teaching at home.
- Some have continued, as parents liked flexibility.
- Great for flipped classroom approach
- Can include parenting helps

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Small Group Focus (Pods)

- Building trust/relationships
- Praying with/for
- Creating community through story sharing
- Equipping, encouraging and supporting

**Leader last week in DOJ*

Paying attention to group relationships has a pedagogical significance: it develops the sense of belonging to the Church and assists growth in the faith. DFC #218

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A Hybrid Approach

- In-Person & Online
- So many ways to do this "both/and" approach



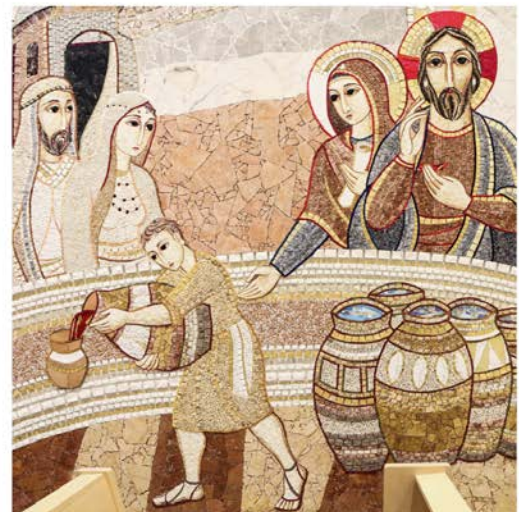
"Enabling families to take up their role as active agents of the family apostolate calls for 'an effort at evangelization and catechesis inside the family.'" DFC #124

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One parish described it this way:

We are excited to offer a formation model that is home-based, family-focused and offers both an on-campus and a digital option to better meet our families' needs.

Inspired by a home-study model and the blended and digital models we used during the pandemic, the parish is offering a model that is more comprehensive and beneficial for all involved.



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Another parish... this way:

Hybrid Faith Formation:

A combination of in-person formation at Church and at-home formation

- First and Third Tuesdays, kids meet in-person from 6:30-7:30pm at the parish
- Second Tuesday, lesson at home
- Fourth Tuesday, Parent & Catechist formation night 6:30-8:00pm



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John Roberto of Lifelong Faith has described it this way:

- Hybrid models of parish life and faith formation integrate in-person gatherings at church or in family groups or small group meetings with online content that offers a rich menu of faith forming experiences.
- Hybrid models hold together two important values: the importance of in-person relationships and faith forming experiences, and the importance of being responsive to the complexity of people's lives and their religious-spiritual needs.
- Hybrid models expand faith formation opportunities for everyone, allowing leaders to become much more strategic about when, where, how, and for what we gather people because we can now integrate online with in-person faith forming.

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Parent/Family Led Faith Formation Plans

- Offered as one component of a program or a supplement to your current program
- This gives parents ownership over their family's faith formation plan
- Allows families to choose lessons, practices, events, etc. according to their own spirituality, the spirituality of their children, their family's schedule, ages of the children, & more
- Can have a Season, Theme, or "Life of the Parish" Focus



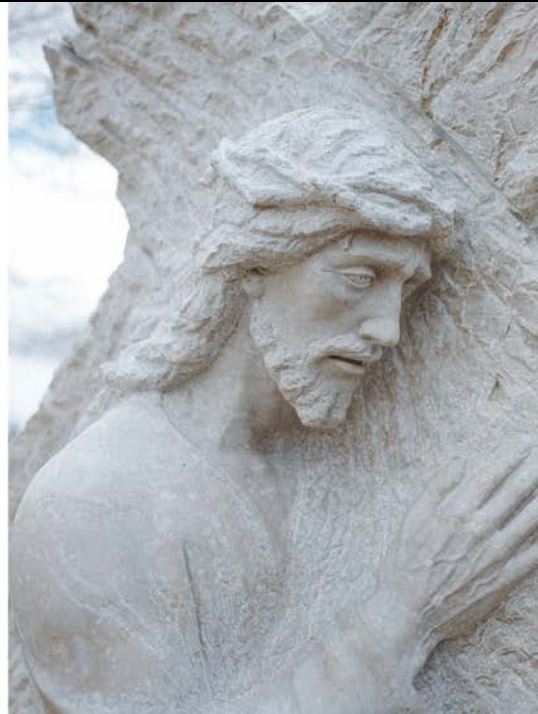
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Seasonally Focused

One Texas parish offered this approach when they returned after COVID.

Example:

- Parents and their children were formed in the practices of Lent. Resources were provided to parents.
- Parents gathered with their children to develop their own Lenten Plan using the formation and resources that had been provided.
- Parents shared how much more meaningful Lent was when they had some ownership over their plan.



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Theme Focused

A Colorado parish offered this approach focused entirely on prayer one year.

Another Texas parish offered this approach focused on Sabbath for an entire year, during the pandemic.

- providing digital resources
- lesson plans
- faith practices
- faith conversations
- even recipes and family night activities



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Life of the Parish Component

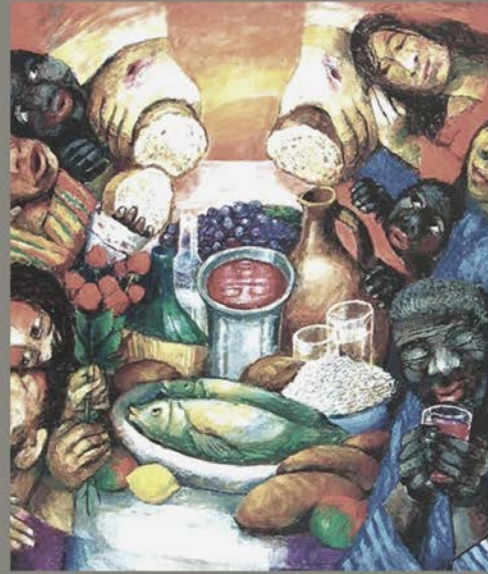
- Based on OHWB "The Parish is the curriculum."
- Parents (with their children) choose from the many formational, devotional, service -oriented and social events a parish has to offer.
- Some parishes have used the categories of the 4 Pillars of the Catechism: We Believe, We Celebrate, We Live, We Pray
- Some have focused on a "Head, Hearts, Hands" approach
- After experiencing the parish event/ministry, parents reflect on the experience and share their story. (Share those stories and make them evangelizers of the faith community.)



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Integrated Faith Formation: Home, Parish, & Community

- AKA a multi-component approach
- Focused on faith practices, faith conversations, connecting to curriculum, parish life, and living the Gospel
- Awakening the parents faith life, connecting them to their children, other parents, and the community

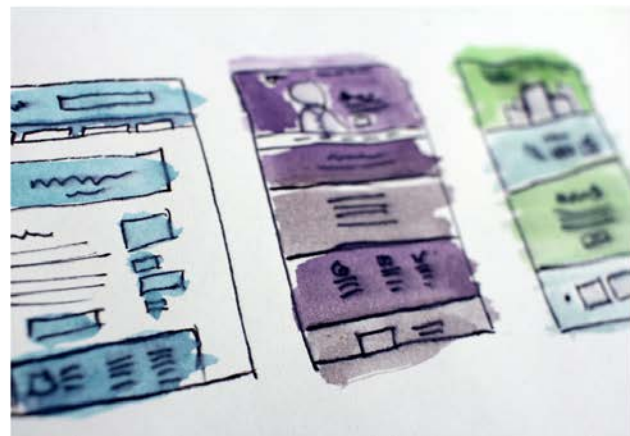


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Integrated Faith Formation

A multi-component approach
One parish offered this with the following components:

- Gathered once a month
 - parents at round tables
 - children with catechists
- Home lessons
- Digital resources
- "Life of the Parish" elective
- "Families Living the Gospel" challenge



Designing for Home, Parish, & Community

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Permission to Reimagine

"Christian parents are irreplaceable":

- what's working for you
- how do you engage parents?
- how do you walk with them?

"The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelizes, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be 'the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters.' This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few." DFC #300

ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE!

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FAMILIES LIVING FAITH

ENGAGING FAMILIES

INTEGRATED FAITH FORMATION

WORK WITH ME

RESOURCES

BLOG



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