



Family Faith Formation at Home

What's Working



• “The family’s catechetical activity has a special character, which is in a sense irreplaceable.” [*Catechesi Tradendae*, 68]

• “Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. . . . Parents have the mission of teaching their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God.” [CCC 2223, 2226]

- ❖ Parents catechize by the way they live. (CT 68)
- ❖ Parents' teaching is deeply rooted in their love for their children. (CSDC 239; FC 36)
- ❖ Parents catechize through teachable moments and family events. (CT 68; GDC 226)

Even so, the home must continue to be the place where we learn to appreciate the meaning and beauty of the faith, to pray and to serve our neighbor.
~ The Joy of Love # 287, Pope Francis

The Call

The call from God to form the faith of our children is laid out in Deuteronomy 6:5-9:

Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength.^e

Take to heart these words which I command you today.

Keep repeating them to your children. Recite them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up.

Bind them on your arm as a sign and let them be as a pendant on your forehead.ⁱ*

Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.^j

In this message to parents, God tells us that family faith is formed in everyday life. Parents and children journey in faith together, weaving faith-shaping practices intentionally and seamlessly into the rhythms of daily living.

“I often want to skip the boring, daily stuff to get to the thrill of an edgy faith.

But it’s in the dailiness of the Christian faith—the making of the bed, the doing the dishes, the praying for our enemies, the reading the Bible, the quiet, the small—that God’s transformation takes root and grows.”

—Tish Harrison Warren,

Liturgy of the Ordinary,

pp. 35-36



The Church teaches us that the family is a community of life and love. Family life is *sacred* and family activities are *holy* because God’s love is communicated through it and revealed in it. With help and guidance, families can come to believe that God dwells among them... empowering them to recognize and respond to God’s grace and movement in their lives.



Why Family Faith Formation?

Faith is best taught and lived out in the family. Children are more likely to put into practice the faith they experience lived out day to day at home; ho their parents model it

Parents are called to be the first and foremost educators of their children. Parents (and family) are the *most* important religious influence on the religious and spiritual outcomes of young people

The early years of a child's development offers receptivity and vulnerability to good formation which only really happens in and through the family; faith practices are nurtured in the family

A family formation program helps families embrace this time and use it to form their children well.

Parents often re-learn (or learn for the first time!) their faith in an easy non-threatening way

Families grow to understand what it means to be a Domestic Church - we can connect the church of the home to the church of the Community (parish)

Through Family Faith Formation, we can help families learn these faith practices for home:

- Reading the Bible as a family and talking about it
- Praying together as a family and encouraging young people to pray personally
- Serving people in need as a family and encouraging children to serve as individuals
- Eating together as a family
- Having family conversations about faith, religious issues, questions, doubts (*God talk*)
- Ritualizing family moments and milestone experiences (*ie Celebrating Baptism days, Graduations, getting a drivers license*)
- Celebrating holidays and church year seasons at home (prayer spaces and visuals)
- Providing moral instruction
- Being involved in a faith community and participating regularly in Sunday worship as a family

Important and Effective Practices

- **Affirm Parents and families.** Encourage them to see the beauty of their call to be parents and their call to be the domestic church, however imperfect they are. Remind them of their holiness.
- **Strengthen families** as they form faith at home by focusing on three areas: family faith forming at home, family activities at Church, and opportunities for formation for parents and grandparents.
- **Help families feel comfortable** with day-to-day practices at home. These are most important to imparting faith to children- reading the Bible together, praying as a family, modeling prayer, doing acts of Christian service together, shared meals, talking about faith and asking questions, ritualizing important moments, Sunday worship and celebrating the Sabbath

Effective Models and Approaches

- **Intergenerational Model** - Gatherings are for multi-age learning for the whole faith community; grandparents can engage with families as well; can do family learning together or break off into age specific groups; send follow up materials home
- **Liturgical or Lectionary based model** - offering lessons that correlate to the lectionary and help families prepare for the Sunday liturgies and holy days at home
- **Family model**: Family based learning at the parish *and* at home; can include age specific lessons and family-based lessons
 - *All can include in person and online learning and materials that are sent home as well as various learning strategies - flipped classroom; hybrid and synchronous and asynchronous learning*

Models and Approaches should embrace and include...

- Recognizing and Encouraging Parents in their role as the primary educators of the faith to their children
- Sunday Liturgy and other worship opportunities
- Good technology and delivery of content - use online resources
- Emphasize story-telling and faith sharing
- Home learning
- Community Outreach and service
- Opportunities to reflect and share



Effective Strategies

Use the Church year, Feasts and Seasons as your curriculum - celebrate these events with families and give them resources to take home to continue the application and learning

- Bless families on the Feast of the Holy Family
- Celebrate St Nicholas on his Feast Day
- Use your parish Feast Day for education/formation
- Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass
- Lenten Toolbox and Theme with resources, links to music, podcasts, readings, videos

Building Family faith practices - teach it with them at Church in family sessions so they can then do it at home together. Have them reflect on it, explore and experience it, and then give them ways they can live it at home.

- for example: Praying with the Bible - Lectio Divina
- Practicing the Sabbath
- A Service Experience combined with at home learning activities such as a video, donating food, etc.

Effective Strategies

Celebrating Milestones – celebrate some of these key moments and transitions in the parish setting – ie, Blessing of the Backpacks, Blessing of the keys, Senior Blessings and Send off, etc. In doing this, we name these sacred moments, we equip them to celebrate at home, we bless them, we can gift them a visible item that reminds them of the occasion (ie backpack tag) and we revisit the learnings from the moments at upcoming gatherings.

Focus on Sunday Liturgies and Lectionary – offer at home discussion questions or Question of the week for the ride home, activities to practice what they heard, etc. Or have them read the Gospel ahead of Sunday worship and discuss so they come prepared to really listen.

Form Parents – have parent sessions for the various stages of life as well as on different current topics (in person or on Zoom). ie, Parent retreats (Celebrate the Dance), professional speakers on topics such as helping teens with anxiety and depression, discussion on the spirituality of parenting, Give packets with useful conversation tips and strategies they can use at home; really listen to parents as well (*ie: parallel program for parents when teens meet for Youth Ministry*)

What's Working in our setting

- **Family Faith Formation Model - Hybrid**
 - **Online curriculum** for children to do weekly lessons at home with their parents - they learn together and spend time together
 - **Children's website** that also has resource sections on the Saints, music, prayers and *Act out* Activities for families to do at home - they practice these things together (You can curate materials and create your own)
 - **Monthly Gatherings** bring families together to learn with and from each other; they are formed by learning and experiencing faith practices they can use at home such as Praying with the Bible - encourages community building and families learning together
 - **Online resources for families** - ie. Lenten Toolbox

Lenten Toolbox sample page

2023 Lenten Toolbox

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mission and to equip your family with resources to grow in understanding of this beautiful liturgical season.

Here are some resources specifically for families and children!

- [An Animated Video on Ash Wednesday for Children](#): This video explains the concept of Lent and Ash Wednesday for younger children.
- [This is a great way to explain Lent](#) to your children with 4 main points on how to ready ourselves for this beautiful liturgical season.
- A Resource on [Making Lent Meaningful for Children](#): This is a teaching tool on the three pillars of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving and gives simple concepts and ideas for how to explain them to elementary-age children.
- [Resources for Families to Celebrate Lent](#): This contains various resources including calendars, preparation checklists, and activities related to the three pillars of Lent.
- Craft Idea on [Creating a Lenten Chain](#)
- A [Resource on Fasting and Giving Up Things](#) for Kids and Teens
- [Stations of the Cross for Children](#) with both a video presentation and PDF guide to pray along with the stations throughout Lent.
- ["Drawing God" Stations of the Cross for Children](#): Have your children draw their own Stations and then pray the Stations as a family. This is a fun and creative way to integrate the stations.

"THE CHRISTIAN HOME IS THE PLACE WHERE CHILDREN RECEIVE THE FIRST PROCLAMATION OF THE FAITH. FOR THIS REASON, THE FAMILY HOME IS RIGHTLY CALLED 'THE DOMESTIC CHURCH,' A COMMUNITY OF GRACE AND PRAYER, A SCHOOL OF HUMAN VIRTUES AND OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY."

(CATECHISM 1666)

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What's Working

- **Special Monthly gatherings** with grandparents and the whole community such as a Scripture Play - the whole parish can come; adults and children are in the play learning and having fun together; a great evangelization tool for families
- **Family Masses** once a Month with children as lectors, greeters, choir (*The Best table in town! Help them make the connections between Mass and their family meals*)
- **Parent only sessions** with professionals - use people in your parish! These parent only sessions also give you time to *listen* to their needs
- **Service opportunities** for families at the parish and ideas for home - families engage together in the parish, receive some formation on Catholic Social teaching; receive shirts and bracelets for further conversation and outreach
 - I.e: Haiti meal packathon; Community Garden (growing seedlings at home)

What's Working: Resources

- <https://www.catholicfamilyfaith.org/>
- www.lifelongfaith.com
- <https://archny.org/ministries-and-offices/youth-faith-formation/family-catechesis-home-resources/>
- <https://www.familyformation.net/>
- <https://www.thereligionteacher.com/>
- <https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/family/family-faith-and-fun/>
- <https://www.growingupcatholic.com/>
- <https://pastoral.center/>

- **Books:**
- A Parish Guide: Integrated Faith Formation (Denise Utter)
- Lifelong Faith (John Roberto)