



NCCL

# Parents & Families

AT THE CENTER OF FAITH FORMATION

## Creating a Family Faith Formation Plan

### 1. Develop Ideas for a Family Plan

The six elements of the **Framework for Family Faith Formation** provide the structure for generating ideas (age-appropriate faith forming programs, activities, strategies, and resources) for creating a parish plan for parent and family faith formation in the first two decades of life – young children, grade school children, young adolescents, and older adolescents. The six elements include:

1. Forming the faith of the family at home
2. Forming the faith of the family in the parish
3. Equipping parents with practices and skills for parenting
4. Equipping parents to be faith formers of their children/teens
5. Providing family catechesis for the entire family
6. Fostering intergenerational relationships

#### Preparation

1. Review what you learned from your portrait of families – their faith, their practices, and their interests – using the summary statements from the “**Parents and families in our parish....**”
2. Review the newsprint sheet with your parish profile of faith formation from birth to 19 years old. Include programs and activities that you want to continue doing in your plan.
3. Review your SWOT analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses/ Challenges, Opportunities, and Threats.
4. Review the 6 priority areas your team identified that the parish needs to address in developing faith formation with families and parents.
5. Generate ideas for all styles of faith and practice by developing ideas that address *Active Believers* (who have a vibrant faith and are engaged in the parish); *Believers* (who participate occasionally in a parish community); *Inactive Believers* (who are not involved in a parish, but may value and live a spiritual life); and *Inactive Nonbelievers*.

#### Activity

The six elements provide the template for generating ideas. You can generate ideas in two ways: **First**, there are ideas/strategies/programs/activities that are designed for one or two life stages, e.g., activities for children. **Second**, there are ideas/strategies/programs/ activities that apply to all four life stages, e.g., parent workshops to introduce a new stage of life.

The key in generating ideas/strategies is to give yourself and the team the freedom to imagine new possibilities. Don’t place limits on your creativity.

- Generate as many ideas and strategies as possible. Feel free to add onto other’s ideas.
- Assume you have the resources you need for any idea (money, staff, facility, etc.).
- Remember that there is no discussion and no critique of ideas.

After you finish generating ideas, connect similar ideas. Then create a final list of all the ideas you have generated.

Develop two reports (on easel paper) – one with ideas for each life stage, and one with ideas that apply to all four life stages. Use the examples on the next pages as a guide. **Bring these reports to Workshop 2.**

## Six Elements of a Family Faith Formation Plan

### **Forming the faith of the family at home**

*(reading the Bible, praying, serving, working for justice, caring for creation, eating together, having family faith conversations, providing moral instruction, celebrating Church year feasts and seasons, liturgical formation, milestones rituals)*

### **Forming the faith of the family in the parish**

*(Sunday Mass, liturgical formation, sacramental celebrations, Church year feasts and seasons, service to those in need, community gatherings)*

### **Equipping parents with practices and skills appropriate to each stage of childhood and adolescence**

*(workshops, webinars, support groups, resources)*

### **Equipping parents to be faith formers of their children and adolescents**

*(workshops, webinars, retreats, support groups, resources)*

### **Providing family catechesis for the entire family**

*(family learning programs, family workshops, Church seasons family festivals, family-centered sacramental preparation)*

### **Fostering intergenerational relationships**

*(connecting families with other generations through intergenerational faith forming experiences)*

## Task 1. Develop Life-Stage Appropriate Ideas/Strategies/Programs/ Activities

	Families with Young Children 0-5	Families with Grade School Children 6-10	Families with Middle School Youth 11-14	Families with High School Youth 14-19
Forming the faith of the family at home				
Forming the faith of the family in the parish				
Equipping parents with practices and skills for parenting				
Equipping parents to be faith formers				
Providing family catechesis for the entire family				
Fostering intergenerational relationships				

## Task 2. Develop Ideas/Strategies/Programs/Activities that Apply to all Four Life Stages

	For all life stages
Forming the faith of the family at home	
Forming the faith of the family in the parish	
Equipping parents with practices and skills for parenting	
Equipping parents to be faith formers of	
Providing family catechesis for the entire family	
Fostering intergenerational relationships	

## 2. Review the Survey Results for Ideas

The Catholic Family Survey provides insights on the types of activities that are responsive to parents and that can become a part of your Faith Formation Plan. Review the family faith practices, the parent practices, and parent enrichment interests. Be sure to look at the highest rated and the lower rated items. Here is a summary of the 8,000+ surveys from all the parishes.

### Family Faith Practices – Most Frequent Practices

**Parents said that the following are the practices their families engage in frequently.** (On a 5 point scale, all of these items were 3.40 or higher – meaning they are practiced frequently or regularly.)

- Having family conversations
- Eating together as a family
- Providing moral instruction
- Praying myself as an adult
- Celebrating the church year seasons at church (e.g., Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter)
- Celebrating rituals and sacraments at church as a family
- Talking about your (parent) faith and religious tradition with children and teens
- Talking about faith or spirituality as a family
- Participating in Sunday Mass as a family
- Praying as a family (mealtime, bedtime)
- Praying as a family during times of struggle or crisis

### Parent Practices – Most Frequent Practices

**Parents said that they do these practices “very much.”** (On a 4 point scale, all of these items were 3.25 or higher – meaning they are practiced much or very much.)

- Encouraging children/teens to pursue their talents and interests
- Cultivating a warm, compassionate, and loving relationship with their children/teens
- Engaging their children/teens in family conversations
- Engaging in positive communication with their children/teens
- Providing moral and values formation
- Demonstrating a warm and affirming parenting approach with their children/teens
- Spending one-on-one time with their children/teens
- Asking for forgiveness when they are wrong or mess up
- Practicing their faith and sharing it with their children/teens
- Balancing religious firmness (this is what we believe and how we live) with religious flexibility (not forcing faith, but inviting and exploring), and respecting my child’s/teen’s views
- Talking about my own faith with my children/teens

### Interest in Parent Enrichment – Top Interests

- Discussing tough topics with my children
- Learning to listen to my children/teens and talk with them about things that matter to them
- Managing screen time and social media use with my children/teens
- Getting involved with my children/teens in serving people in need
- Developing the strengths and potential of my child
- Managing my time and balancing the many commitments as a parent
- Developing strong relationships of warmth and love in our family and express care for each other
- Encouraging children/teens to talk about their doubts and questions about faith
- Providing moral and values instruction to my children’/teens and teaching them healthy concepts of right and wrong
- Growing in my (parent) relationship with Jesus Christ and what it means to follow Jesus in daily life
- Growing in my (parent) understanding and practice of the Catholic faith
- Praying together as a family

### 3. Consider a Variety of Formats

#### On Your Own

*On your own learning gives people choice about when, how, where, and what to learn, for example:*

- Reading or listening to books and online recommended reading lists
- Websites for learning, prayer and spiritual formation, action for service and justice
- Online courses: Bible, theology, parenting
- Online retreat
- Podcasts
- Videos and video-based programs
- Online prayer websites
- Daily activities online and through apps: prayer, Bible reading, devotions, and much more

#### Mentoring

*Mentoring incorporates one-to-one relationships in faith formation, for example:*

- Mentors or guides for new parents
- Spiritual direction
- Apprenticeships
- Gifts discernment
- Vocational or calling discernment and formation
- Strengths discernment

#### Small Group

*Small group formats provide lots of flexibility in content, schedule, and location (online, home, coffee shops, at church, and more) and create an accepting environment in which new relationships can be formed, for example:*

- Discipleship, faith sharing, or study groups such as Bible study groups, theological study groups, thematic or issue-oriented study groups, Sunday lectionary-based faith-sharing groups, seasonal small groups such as Lenten study groups
- Spiritual direction and formation: prayer and spiritual growth groups
- Book or video study groups
- Practice-focused groups such as service/faith in action groups
- Support groups
- Parent support groups for different stages of family life

#### Large Group

*Large group formats provide a way to engage a wider audience, for example:*

- Presentations and single-session programs
- Multisession program such as a speaker series or video series
- Seasonal celebrations and presentations through the church year
- Roundtable discussions after Sunday worship to explore the scripture readings and sermon
- Workshops focused on practical knowledge and skills for age groups or families or all ages
- Field trips such as visiting a museum
- Retreat experiences such as an evening, one-day, or weekend program
- Church-wide action projects for service, justice, or care for creation
- Music, art, film, drama or dance programs, performances, and festivals
- Family catechesis programs
- Intergenerational programs for all ages

#### Community

Community-based formats offer a way for churches to utilize programs, courses, clinics, workshops, and presentations sponsored by other churches, community organizations (libraries, the Y, museums), regional and national church agencies, retreat centers, Christian camps, and colleges.

#### Hybrid & Online Formats

Hybrid models – in person and online together – expand faith formation opportunities for everyone. Parishes can become much more intentional about when, where, how, and why they gather because they can now integrate online with in-person faith forming. The key to hybrid catechesis is the integration of in-person faith forming with online faith forming in one holistic integrated experience.

Parishes can develop online catechetical programming (asynchronous) using the abundance of online programs and resources for all ages. Churches can develop an online faith formation experience with content and experiences, such as an online Advent or Lent curriculum, that connects the seasonal events at church with online content for experiencing the season in daily and home life.

## 4. Review these Idea Starters for Families

Use a variety of programming formats to implement your strategies, such as a digital platform for families with the resources in print, audio, and video formats; a monthly print or digital newsletter/magazine; family catechesis programming on a topic, theme, season, or practice; monthly parent gatherings in conjunction with existing age group gatherings; courses, workshops, and webinars; mentoring, small groups (in-person and online). Review the variety of formats in Part 3.

**Provide liturgical formation** designed around the Lectionary readings or the Church year season with a variety of resources that help families experience, reflect, and apply the theme from Sunday to their family life throughout the week. For example:

- Family conversation questions on the theme of the Sunday readings
- Activities for the Church year feast or season
- Weekly table ritual
- Podcast or video of the sermon with a study guide for the parents, children's creative Bible activities, storybooks, video presenting the Bible story
- Daily prayer, weekly family devotion
- Short Bible reading for each day of the week, online resources for studying the Bible (print, audio, video)
- Ideas for living the biblical teaching in the family or in the community.

**Celebrate the seasons of the year** at home by identifying a monthly seasonal event and Incorporating Scripture, prayer, learning, service/action, ritual, and family conversation into each seasonal event. Highlight a Christian practice that will be communicated and experienced through the event. For example:

- January: Martin Luther King Jr. (working for justice and peace, serving)
- February: Valentine's Day (loving)
- March: Lent (praying, serving/almsgiving, forgiving)
- April: Easter (new life) and Earth Day (caring for creation)
- May: Mother's Day (honoring parents, loving caring)
- June: Father's Day (honoring parents, loving, caring)
- July: Independence Day (working for justice)
- August: Back to school (celebrating new beginnings)
- September: Fall harvest (being grateful, generosity, caring for the earth)
- October: St. Francis (caring for creation, caring for animals, living simply)
- November: Thanksgiving (being grateful, serving, living hospitality)
- December: Advent and Christmas (celebrating rituals, praying, serving)

**Provide formation in Christian Practices** in a variety of formats: Raising religious children is primarily a practice-centered process, not chiefly a didactic teaching program. Certain faith practices make a significant difference in nurturing the faith of children and adolescents at home, especially:

- Reading the Bible as a family and encouraging young people to read the Bible regularly
- Praying together as a family and encouraging young people to pray personally
- Serving people in need as a family and supporting service activities by young people
- Eating together as a family
- Having family conversations about faith
- Talking about faith, religious issues, and questions and doubts
- Ritualizing important family moments and milestone experiences
- Celebrating holidays and church year seasons at home
- Celebrating milestones and sacraments in the lives of individuals and the whole family
- Providing moral instruction
- Being involved in the parish community and participating regularly in Sunday Mass as a family

**Offer annual retreats for each life stage:** Family retreats (half day or full day) focused on following Jesus and introducing the practices of discipleship or each of the four stages of life (half-day or full day)

**Develop a yearlong focus on the Bible,** such as the “Bible Story of Month” to introduce important stories and teachings in the Bible by teaching the practices for reading, interpreting, praying, and applying the scriptures to their lives. Select twelve of the most relevant and developmentally appropriate Bible stories for each age. Integrate the Bible teaching into one session or program each month. Provide online resources for parents to reinforce the Bible story online: reading the story, watching the video, discussing the story.

**Develop the prayer life of children, teens, and families** by focusing on learning Catholic prayers, teaching the different forms of prayer, and/or experiencing a prayer practice each month during the class or program. Have children and teens experience the different types of prayer: contemplative, Scriptural, intercessory, praise (adoration), and thanksgiving. Develop a short video of the children or teens praying so that parents can see prayer in action. Develop the “prayer of the month” for families.

**Engage families in serving those in need, caring for creation, and working for justice.** Develop an annual family or parish-wide Service Day, a monthly family Service Project, and family Service Nights at the parish. Create immersive experiences for families where they can experience service/justice/care for creation firsthand, such as hospitality at a homeless shelter or serving a meal at a soup kitchen or caring for creation by planting a garden. Combine the at-church experience with activities for families to do at home.

**Celebrate one-time milestones and annual milestones** through experiences at home and programs in the parish with activities that include learning, prayer, celebrating a ritual, and reflecting together on the experience. Consider for example: Birth and Baptism, anniversary of Baptism, welcoming young children to worship, beginning faith formation at church, annual blessing of the backpacks at the beginning of a new school year, first Bible, school graduations and transitions, driver’s license, and more.

**Develop family life skills** by adding a parent-child/teen component to age group faith formation or by adding special parent-child/teen programs throughout the year. Focus on the types of skill-building that will strengthen family life, and parent-child/teen relationships, such as: communicating effectively, discussing tough topics, making decisions and solving problems as a family, learning how to build strong relationships and express care for each other, supporting each other (encouraging and praising, giving feedback, standing up for each other), and treating each with respect and dignity. Many of these skills can be developed using movies selected for their positive messages. An example of a movie that provides a foundation for follow-up activities is Disney/Pixar’s *Inside Out* about the emotional life of child growing up.

## 5. Review these Idea Starters for Parents

**Develop a progression of “Stage of Life” parent workshops** (in-person and online) and a resource kit for parents (digital) to prepare as the family enters a new stage of life. Consider workshops, webinars, or courses through the life cycle as children and adolescents enter a new stage of life—birth: parenting young children; start of school: parenting older children; parenting young adolescents; parenting older adolescents; parenting emerging adults.

**Provide targeted programs of theological and biblical formation for parents** in a variety of learning formats to make it easy for them to access the opportunities: independent (online), mentored, at home, in small groups, in large groups, or church-wide. Incorporate a parent component into an adult faith formation program so that the specific needs of parents can be addressed. This content needs to be tailored to the four spiritual-religious identities of parents—active, occasional, spiritual/uninvolved, and unaffiliated; and to the traditions, beliefs, and practices of the particular Christian tradition. For example:

- Developing and sustaining a personal relationship and commitment to Jesus Christ

- Living as a disciple of Jesus Christ and making the Christian faith a way of life
- Reading and studying the Bible—its message, meaning, and application to life today
- Learning the Christian story and foundational teachings of the Christian faith (Trinity, Jesus, creed, morality and ethics) and integrating its meaning into one’s life
- Praying—together and by ourselves, and seeking spiritual growth through spiritual disciplines
- Living with moral integrity guided by Christian ethics and values
- Living the Christian mission in the world—serving those in need, caring for God’s creation, and acting and advocating for justice and peace.
- Worshipping God with the community at Sunday worship, ritual celebrations, and the seasons of the church year
- Being actively engaged in the life, ministries, and activities of the faith community
- Practicing faith in Jesus Christ by using one’s gifts and talents within the Christian community and in the world

**Add a parent component to existing programming.** For example:

- Add a parallel parent experience to the existing children and adolescent program where parents can gather occasionally for a targeted program while their children are in age-specific programs.
- Add a parent component to vacation Bible school in the evenings or online.
- Incorporate parent formation and education into parish events that already engage parents, such as parent preparation programs for baptism, first communion, or confirmation, as well as the celebration of milestones

**Provide parent support** through gathered settings (church, home, community) and in online groups (such as a Facebook parents group) that provide opportunities for parents with children in the same age group to talk about parenting, get information and encouragement, discuss family life issues and challenges, and more. Parishes can also sponsor support groups for divorced parents, parents in blended families, parents of children with special needs, and other affinity groupings. An example of a life cycle support group is MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers).

**Equip parents with the knowledge and skills for passing on faith** so they can incorporate faith practices into the day-to-day religious practices of the family by providing courses, workshops, webinars, mentoring, resources (digital, print, audio, video), online small groups, and more, focused on:

- having family conversations about religious topics
- reading and discussing the Bible with children and teens
- prayer as a family and encourage children and teens to pray
- participating in Sunday worship as a family
- celebrating family rituals and milestones
- celebrating holidays and seasons as a family
- engaging in actions of service, justice, and care for creation as a family and encouraging children and teens to serve
- talking about faith and the religious tradition, and providing moral instruction and discussing moral issues with children and teens

**Equip parents with the knowledge and skills for developing quality relationships** with their young people and applying styles of parenting that make a difference in faith transmission by providing courses, workshops, webinars, mentoring, resources (digital, print, audio, video), online small groups, and more, focused on:

- Cultivating relationships of warmth and love which makes everything else possible
- Balancing religious firmness with religious flexibility in their parenting so as to maintain more positive relationships with their children

- Transmitting their faith to their children while honoring their agency by teaching principles and values, providing expectations of religious participation and responsibility, not forcing faith, allowing exploration and mistakes, and showing respect for children’s views
- Talking about religious matters during the week – when parents talk about their religion in personal terms that sends a strong message to their kids that it’s important to them
- Practicing an “authoritative” parenting style (as opposed to authoritarian, permissive, or uninvolved style) by maintaining and enforcing high standards and expectations for their children while simultaneously expressing a lot of open warmth and connection to their children, and confidently giving them enough space to work out their own views and values
- Listening more and preaching less. It is a more satisfying and successful religious and relational experience when the conversations are more child/youth-centered than parent-centered

**Equip parents with the knowledge and skills for effective parenting** by providing courses, workshops, webinars, mentoring, resources (digital, print, audio, video), online small groups, and more, focused on:

- Expressing care to young people by listening to them, being dependable, encouraging them, and make them feel known and valued
- Challenging young people by expecting them to do their best and live up to their potential
- Providing support for young people by encouraging their efforts and achievements and guiding them to learn and grow
- Treating young people with respect, hearing their voices, and including them in decisions that affect them
- Inspiring young people to see possibilities for their future, expose them to new experiences and places, and connect them to people who can help them grow
- Demonstrating a warm and affirming parenting approach
- Creating a warm, caring supportive family environment
- Practicing effective communication skills
- Managing screen time and social media use
- Learning effective discipline practices
- Creating a warm, caring supportive family

**Provide parent mentors** (or coaches) who can offer guidance and support for parents and the whole family at each stage of life from birth through the end of adolescence. Mentors can accompany parents and families in their spiritual lives, guiding them in growing in their relationship with God and learning more about the faith. Mentoring can be life-cycle specific with mentors who focus on children or adolescents. Parents mentors can be drawn from the grandparent generation who are actively engaged in church and bring decades of parenting and family life experiences. Churches can provide training for mentors (mentoring skills, understanding today’s family, learning how to access online resources and activities).

**Use online platforms and digitally enabled strategies** that can utilize the abundance of digital media and tools for parent formation and education—to engage parents anytime, anyplace, and just-in-time—and extend and expand faith formation from physical, face-to-face settings into their daily lives through digital content and mobile delivery systems. Online platforms for parents (websites) integrate the content (programs, activities, resources), connect people to the content and to each other, provide continuity for people across different learning experiences, and make everything available anytime, anywhere, 24-7-365. Digital media tools and resources—social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and more), webinars and online learning, video conferencing, videos, audio podcasts, and much more—provide more features in designing parent programs, more methods for delivering programs, and more ways to connecting parents to each other.

## 6. Review these Ideas for Sacramental Preparation in a Catechumenal Model

The catechumenal model of formation provides a holistic formation process that includes:

- A first proclamation of the Gospel (kerygma)
- A comprehensive introduction to the Christian life
- Liturgies, rituals, and symbols that engage the heart and the senses
- A community of faith and support
- Apprenticeship and mentoring in faith
- Engagement in the mission of the Church and service to the world
- Formation that fosters conversion of heart and mind in a new way of life
- Ever deeper formation in faith and the life of the community (mystagogy)

Using the catechumenal process, catechesis can be *personalized* around people's religious faith:

1. Those who have a vibrant faith and relationship with God and are engaged in a faith community
2. Those who participate occasionally in the community and whose faith is less central to their daily lives
3. Those who are unininvolved in a faith community and who value and live their spirituality outside of organized religion
4. Those who are unaffiliated and have left involvement in organized religion, and have little need for God or religion in their lives.

The catechumenal process can offer catechesis for those who need "taste and see" experiences, "refresher" experiences, "growing" experiences, and "going deeper" experiences.

### Catechumenal Process for Baptism

#### ***Three Pathways through "Remote" Preparation***

1. For parents who have not been active in their faith life and practice – provide a first proclamation of the Gospel (kerygma) and then an introduction to the Christian life.
2. For parents who need a refresher – provide an introduction to the Christian life.
3. For parents who are growing in their faith – provide an exploration of the areas of the Christian life where they need growth.

#### ***"Immediate" Preparation for All Parents***

- Catechesis on Baptism: theology, rituals, and symbols
- Engagement with a community of faith and support – other parents or families and the intergenerational faith community
- Mentoring by members of the faith community

#### ***Celebration of Baptism***

#### ***Continued Growth and Accompaniment (Mystagogy)***

- A continuous plan for family forming from Baptism to First Eucharist using the seven elements of faith forming (see above)
- Continuing parent formation
- Continued mentoring and support for parents
- Continued engagement with a community of faith and support

## Catechumenal Process for First Eucharist

### ***Three Pathways through “Remote” Preparation***

1. For parents and children who have not been active in their faith life and practice – provide a first proclamation of the Gospel (kerygma) and then an introduction to the Christian life.
2. For parents and families who are active and growing in their faith – provide an exploration of the areas of the Christian life where they need growth.

### ***“Immediate” Preparation for All Parents***

- Catechesis on the sacrament of Eucharist: theology, rituals, and symbols
- Family-centered preparation for the whole family – large group or parent/family small groups
- Family retreat experience
- Engagement with the intergenerational faith community and Sunday Mass

### ***Continued Growth and Accompaniment (Mystagogy)***

- Family catechesis programming in the parish
- A continuous plan for faith formation at home
- Parent formation and continued mentoring and support for parents
- Continued engagement with a community of faith and support

## Catechumenal Process for Confirmation

### ***Three Pathways through “Remote” Preparation***

- For young people who are not actively living their faith and have not been involved in faith formation since their First Eucharist – provide a first proclamation of the Gospel (kerygma) and then an introduction to the Christian life. Consider offering a specialized mini-course or retreat experience or a small group mentored experience focused on an introduction to the Christian faith and the parish community.
- For young people who are actively practicing their faith and have been involved in faith formation – provide a deeper exploration into the Bible and the Catholic tradition in areas special interest to them.

### ***“Immediate” Preparation***

- Catechesis on the sacrament of Confirmation: theology, rituals, and symbols with sponsors invited to journey with the young people and participate in sessions.
- Spiritual formation in the practices of prayer
- Engagement with a community of faith and support – offered through intergenerational service projects, parish prayer partners, parish-wide liturgies and activities, and more.
- Retreat opportunities offered in different formats and time commitments.
- Mentoring by members of the faith community – creating programming which encourages young people to partner with an adult in short term formats such as a five-week Lenten faith sharing series.

## ***Celebration of the Sacrament***

### ***Continued Growth and Accompaniment (Mystagogy)***

- Preparation for living one’s faith in the young adult years
- In-depth catechesis that is interest-based
- Exploration of calling and vocation
- Intergenerational projects in the faith community, e.g., justice, service, care for creation
- Involvement in leadership and peer ministry
- Continued mentoring

# Example of a Plan for Families with Young Children (0-5)

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*Programs, activities, and resources are designed to provide a variety of experiences that address the distinct religious needs and interests of Active Believers, Believers, and Inactive Believers.*

## **Forming the faith of the family at home**

- Monthly digital newsletter (with website page) of activities for the whole family and age-appropriate activities for each of the five years of early childhood, including a monthly Bible story, prayers throughout the day and week (bedtime, mealtime, seasons of the year), movie/video suggestions, family activities, etc.
- Milestones activities (online) to celebrate the transitions or rituals of early childhood, such as birthdays, baptism anniversaries, first prayers (learning the Lord’s Prayer), entry to preschool and kindergarten, etc.
- “Welcome to the Season Celebration Kits” digital and print resource for the home to introduce young children to the celebration of the seasons of the Church year (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, All Saints/All Souls)
- Children’s “Storybook of the Month” – age appropriate suggestions of storybooks that focus on values, morals, and spiritual themes

## **Forming the faith of the family in the parish and fostering intergenerational relationships**

- Connecting parents at Baptism with mentors from the parish community (e.g., grandparents) to accompany them on their journey from Baptism to start of school (pray for them, meet with them, accompany them to Sunday Mass, etc.)
- Children’s Liturgy of the Word at Sunday Mass where children through prayers, songs and readings learn about the same Scriptures as the rest of the community
- “Welcome to Sunday Mass” experience for families with young children, including a video for parent preparation, an illustrated guide to the Mass for children to use at Mass, age-appropriate activities for children on the lectionary readings (e.g., coloring a handout illustrating the Gospel reading during Mass or at home)
- Parish dinner for families who had a child baptized in the past to meet other parents with young children (babysitting provided), hosted by the ministries and organizations of the parish (such as a women’s group and men’s group)
- Seasonal creative arts festivals, e.g., Advent wreath-making activity at the parish for families with young children and grade school children

## **Equipping parents with practices and skills for parenting and to be faith forms of their children**

- A two-part “Welcome to a New Stage of Life” workshop and/or webinar focused on understanding growth and development of young children, parent practices for this stage of life, faith forming activities appropriate to this stage of life (how to pray with children, how to read a Bible story, etc.)
- Parent enrichment webinars (monthly or quarterly) and an online parent library of videos, podcasts, and articles on topics of interest to parents of young children
- Twice yearly half-day retreat for parents of young children to nurture their growth in faith and to connect and share with other parents (with babysitting)
- Parent support groups for support, prayer, and faith sharing (in-person or online)

# Example of a Plan for Families with Children (Grades 1 through 8)

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*Programs, activities, and resources are designed to provide a variety of experiences that address the distinct religious needs and interests of Active Believers, Believers, and Inactive Believers.*

## **Providing family catechesis for the entire family**

- Monthly family catechesis program using the following format:
  - Week #1. Family session at church on the topic of the month (90 minutes to 2 hours)
  - Week #2. At-home faith formation with online resources on the topic of the month
  - Week #3. Age group session at church for children, young teens, and parents to go deeper into the topic of the month (75-90 minutes)
  - Week #4. At-home faith formation with online resources on the topic of the month
- Theme for the Year: Jesus and Discipleship
  - Preparing for the Messiah - December
  - Becoming a Disciple – Part 1 and 2 (January and February)
  - Death of the Messiah – Lent and Holy Week
  - New Life in Christ – Easter Season
  - Identity of Christ – Easter Season
  - Living as a Disciple – September-November

*(For examples of family learning sessions go to: <https://www.intergenerationalfaith.com/jesus-discipleship.html>)*

## **Forming the faith of the family at home**

- “Faith at Home” monthly online experiences with a variety of activities for age groups and family activities on the theme of the monthly family program. Types of activities: Scripture reading and reflection, prayer, family faith conversations, living your faith, watching videos on the topic, etc.
- “Seasonal Celebration Kits” digital and print resource to prepare for, celebrate (at church and home), and live the Church year (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, All Saints/All Souls)
- “Big Bible Story of the Month” – age appropriate activities for the family to read, explore, pray, and apply one Bible story each month

## **Forming the faith of the family in the parish and fostering intergenerational relationships**

- Family engaging celebrations of the Church year feasts and seasons with at-home celebration using the “Seasonal Celebration Kit”
- Quarterly “Service Project Days” for the entire family, together with the other generations in the parish

## **Equipping parents with practices and skills for parenting and faith forming**

- Annual retreat day for parents, focused on their growth in faith and discipleship
- A two-part “Welcome to a New Stage of Life” workshop (and/or webinar) – one for parents with children entering grade 1 and a second for parents with young people entering middle school – focused on understanding growth and development, parent practices for this new stage of life, faith forming activities appropriate to this stage of life, etc.
- Parent enrichment webinars (monthly or quarterly) and online parent library of videos, podcasts, and articles on topics of interest to parents (see Parent Interests in the survey results):
  - discussing tough topics with my children
  - learning to listen to my children and talk with them about things that matter to them
  - managing screen time and social media use
  - developing the strengths and potential of my child
  - managing my time and balancing the many commitments as a parent
  - developing strong relationships of warmth and love in our family and expressing care for each other
  - encouraging children to talk about their doubts and questions about faith
  - providing moral and values instruction and teaching healthy concepts of right and wrong
  - praying together as a family