



Parents & Families at the Center of Faith Formation

John Roberto

Materials: www.lifelongfaith.com/kidsmin.html
Under "Home" Tab

1

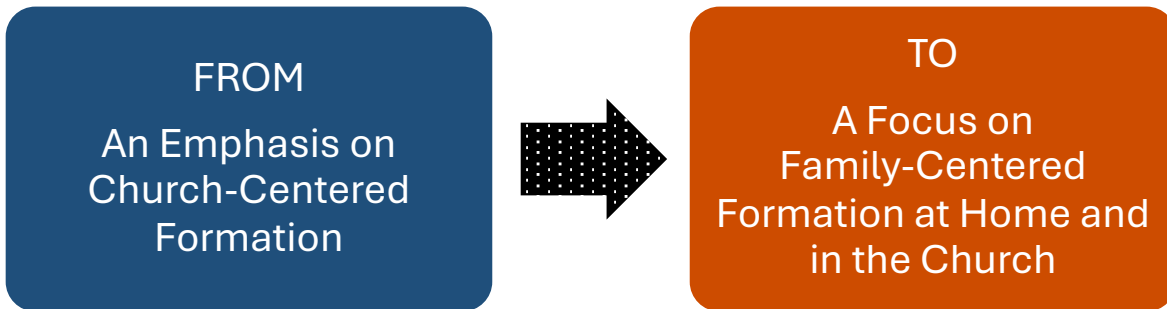
Presentation

1. What is research telling us about family faith formation today?
2. What is a helpful "framework" for family faith formation in the first two decades of life?
3. What are examples of family learning models and approaches?



2

Families at the Center: Shifting our Perspective



3

The slide features a dark blue vertical bar on the left side containing the NCCL Parents & Families logo. The main content area has a background of wavy, overlapping bands in shades of light blue, green, and orange. The text is centered and reads: 'Part 1 What is the research telling us about family faith formation?'.

4

Important Insights from Research on Parents & Family Faith Formation

CARA Research Study – Spring 2024

1,533 self-identified Catholics, expecting or have a child 0-18 years

NCCL Family Project Research Study

8000+ parents in 200 parishes across the U.S



5

Insight #1. Focus on Parents

Parents are the most significant influence on the religious and spiritual outcomes of young people.

The parental factors that make a significant difference include the personal faith and practice of parents and caregivers, and a close, warm, nurturing parent-child relationship.

It is critically important that parents are authentic examples of what they claim to believe. Their authenticity includes faithful living as well as sharing with their children their struggles and failings.



6

Parent Faith & Practice

A continuum of religiosity and practice

- ◆ 36% - Active Believer, involved in a parish community
- ◆ 44% - Believer, occasionally involved in a parish community
- ◆ 17% - Inactive Believer, not involved in a parish community
- ◆ 4% - Inactive Nonbeliever

Viewing Self Religiously

- ◆ 16% - The most important part of your life
- ◆ 33% - Among the most important parts of your life
- ◆ 34% - Important but so are many other areas of your life
- ◆ 11% - Not too important in your life
- ◆ 6% - Not important in your life at all

Importance of Catholic Faith

49% say their faith is “among the most important” or “the most important” part(s) of their lives



7

Parent Beliefs

1. God cares for me in a special way (57% strongly agree)
2. I know that Jesus Christ is the son of God who died on a cross and rose again
3. I am keenly aware of being in the presence of God in my life
4. My faith helps me know right from wrong
5. I am spiritually moved by the beauty of God's creation
6. My faith shapes how I think and act
7. I have a sense of sharing in a great purpose
8. I see evidence that God is active in the world
9. Religious faith is important in my life
10. I have a real sense that God is guiding me (44% strongly agree)



8

Insight #2. Focus on Daily Life

The primary way by which Catholic 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.

To raise children to understand and carry on their family's religion parents need to practice their own personal religious faith, naturally, for its own sake and as role models for their children. If all goes well, children will over time learn, absorb, and embrace their own version of that faith, almost unconsciously.



9

Parent Perception of Children's Enthusiasm

The following family practices were statistically significant predictors of a parent saying their child was reacting enthusiastic/positive about being Catholic.

- ◆ Reading the Bible as a family
- ◆ Encouraging children/teens to read the Bible alone or with their peers
- ◆ Reading the Bible as an adult
- ◆ Talking about faith and spirituality as a family
- ◆ Celebrating rituals and sacraments at church as a family

The more frequently a family does these things the more likely their children are responding positively to being raised Catholic.



10

Parent Perception of Children's Enthusiasm

- ◆ A parent who said their **family “regularly” talks about faith and spirituality** together is more than four times likely than a parent who said their family “never” does this to say their child is positive about being Catholic.
- ◆ Similar probabilities are associated with
 - ◆ celebrating rituals and sacraments at church as a family
 - ◆ reading the Bible as a family
 - ◆ encouraging children/teens to read the Bible alone or with their peers



11

Insight #3. Focus on Practice

The family is the primary community where Christian faith practices are nurtured and practiced.

Raising religious children should thus primarily be a practice-centered process, not chiefly a didactic teaching program. Parents modeling religious practices is primary, and explaining belief systems is secondary.



12

Insight #3. Focus on Practice

- ◆ 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
- ◆ Providing moral instruction
- ◆ Being involved in a faith community and participating regularly in Sunday worship as a family



13

Family Faith Practices

Practice	CARA	Parent Surveys
Eating together as a family	#1	X
Having family conversations about faith	#2	X
Providing moral instruction	#3	X
Praying as a family	#4	X
Celebrating Church year seasons	#5	X
Praying as a family during times of struggle or crisis	#6	X
Having family conversations about faith/spirituality	#7	X
Participating in Sunday Mass as a family	#8	X
Encouraging teens to pray	#9	-
Serving people in need as a family	#10	-



14

Insight #4. Focus on Relationships

The quality of parents' relationships with their young people and the parenting style they practice make a significant difference in faith transmission.

- ◆ Parents cultivate relationships of warmth and love which makes everything else possible.
- ◆ Parents balance religious firmness with religious flexibility in their parenting.
- ◆ Parents balance desire for religious continuity with children's agency.
- ◆ Parents talk with their children about religious matters during the week.
- ◆ Parents practice an "authoritative" parenting style (as opposed to authoritarian, permissive, or uninvolved style); they maintain and enforce high standards and expectations for their children.
- ◆ Parents listen more and preach less; conversations are more youth-centered.



15

We're doing a good job & it's important to us.

- ◆ 36% - Excellent
- ◆ 44% - Very good
- ◆ 17% - Good
- ◆ 2% - Only fair
- ◆ 1% - Poor

Rating their job as a parent

- ◆ 61% - Most important
- ◆ 33% - One of the most important
- ◆ 5% - Important but not one of the most important aspects
- ◆ 1% - Not too important an aspect

Importance of being a parent to who you are as a person



16

Parent Practices: What We Do

1. I encourage my children/teens to pursue their talents and interests (62% very much)
2. I cultivate a warm, compassionate, and loving relationship with my children/teens
3. I engage in positive communication with my children/teens
4. I demonstrate a warm and affirming parenting approach with my children/teens
5. I spend one-on-one time with my children/teens
6. I engage my children/teens in family conversations
7. I provide moral and values formation of my children/teens
8. I ask for forgiveness when I am wrong or mess up
9. I try to balance religious firmness (what we believe and how we live) with religious flexibility (not forcing faith, but inviting and exploring), and respecting my child's views
10. I engage my children/teens in family conversations about faith and religious matters
11. I practice my faith and share it with my children/teens
12. I participate with my children/teens in activities, e.g. service projects



17

Interest in Parent Enrichment

At least 40% of all parents said they were very interested in these topics:

- ◆ 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



18

Interest in Parent Enrichment

- ◆ 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



19

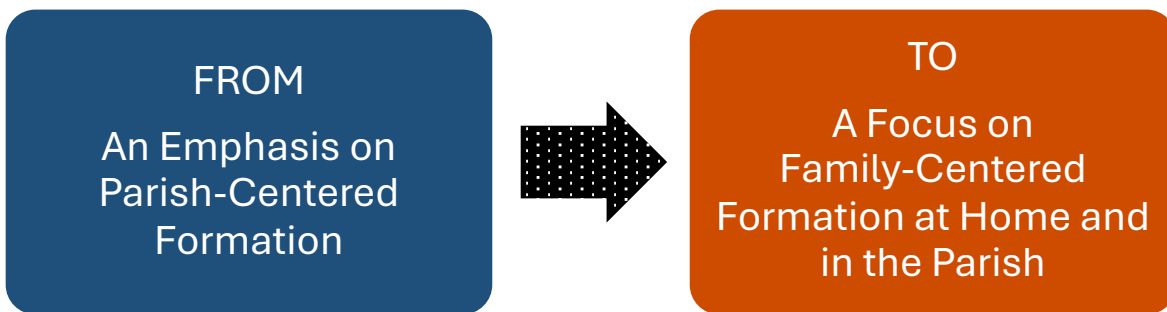


Part 2

What is a helpful framework for family faith Formation?

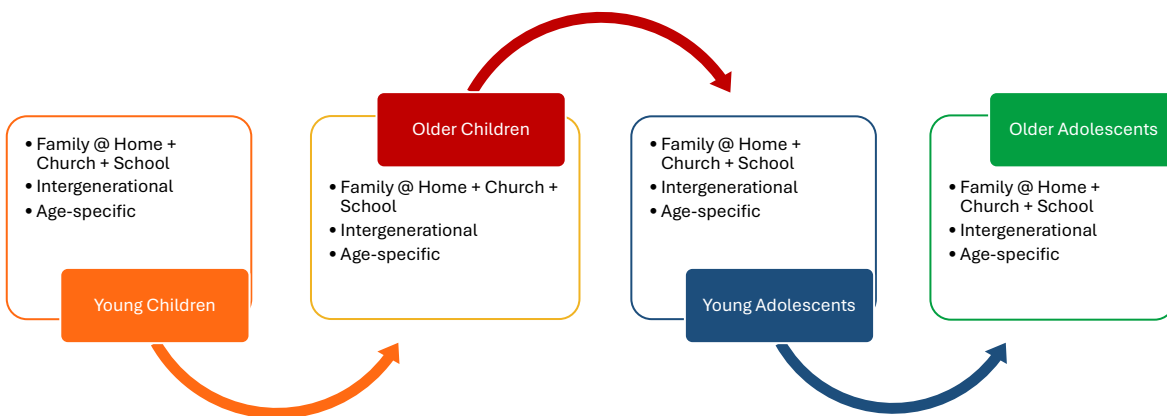
20

Families at the Center: Shifting our Perspective



21

Family Faith Formation in 0-19 Years Old




22

A Framework for Family Faith Formation

- ◆ 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 their children/teens
- ◆ Providing family learning for the entire family
- ◆ Fostering intergenerational relationships



23



A Framework for Developing a Family Faith Formation Plan

	Children 0-5	Children 6-10	Youth 11-14	Youth 14-19
Forming the faith of the family at home through.... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family faith practices Liturgical formation Milestones rituals Church year feasts and seasons 				
Forming the faith of the family in the parish through.... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family faith practices Liturgical formation Milestones rituals Church year feasts and seasons 				
Equipping parents with practices and skills for parenting through.... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops, webinars, support groups, etc. Resources 				
Equipping parents to be faith formers of their children/teens through.... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops, webinars, retreats, small groups, etc. Resources 				
Providing family catechesis for the entire family through programs, events, and gatherings at the parish.... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thematic family catechesis (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly) Family catechesis programs on the Church year feasts and seasons Family workshops on religious and family life topics 				
Fostering intergenerational relationships..... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connecting families with other generations through intergenerational faith forming experiences 				

24

Developing a Family Plan: Birth to 6

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
 - 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.

Birth	6 Months	1 Year	18 Months	2 Years	30 Months	3 Years	42 Months	4 years	54 Months	5 years
-------	-------------	--------	--------------	---------	--------------	---------	--------------	---------	--------------	---------



25

Developing a Family Plan: Birth to 6

Forming the Faith of the Family at Home

- “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



26

Developing a Family Plan: Birth to 6

Forming the Faith of the Family in the Parish and 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
- 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
- Parish dinner for families who had a child baptized in the past to meet other parents with young children (babysitting provided)
- Seasonal creative arts festivals, e.g., Advent wreath-making activity at the parish for families with young children and grade school children



27

Developing a Family Plan: Birth to 6

Equipping Parents: Practices and Skills for Parenting and Being Faith Formers 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)



28

A Framework for Family Faith Formation

IDEAS FOR EACH STAGE OF LIFE	Young children	Grade school children	Middle school young people	High school young people
Formation at home				
Formation at the parish				
Parent education				
Parent faith formation				
Family learning				
Intergenerational relationships				

IDEAS FOR MULTIPLE LIFE STAGES	Life Stages
Formation at home	
Formation at the parish	
Parent education	
Parent faith formation	
Family learning	
Intergenerational relationships	

29



Part 3

What are learning models for family faith formation?

30

Models of Family Learning

<p>Primary Model for Faith Formation</p> <p>Families with children through middle school</p> <p>Monthly Twice monthly Weekly</p>	<p>Integrated Model of Faith Formation</p> <p>With age-group programming</p> <p>Within sacramental preparation</p>	<p>Seasonal Family Formation Gatherings</p> <p>Church Year Seasons: Advent, Lent</p> <p>Fall Winter Spring</p>	<p>Workshops</p> <p>Retreats</p> <p>Family Small Groups or Family Clusters</p> <p>Family Vacation Bible School</p>
---	---	---	--



31

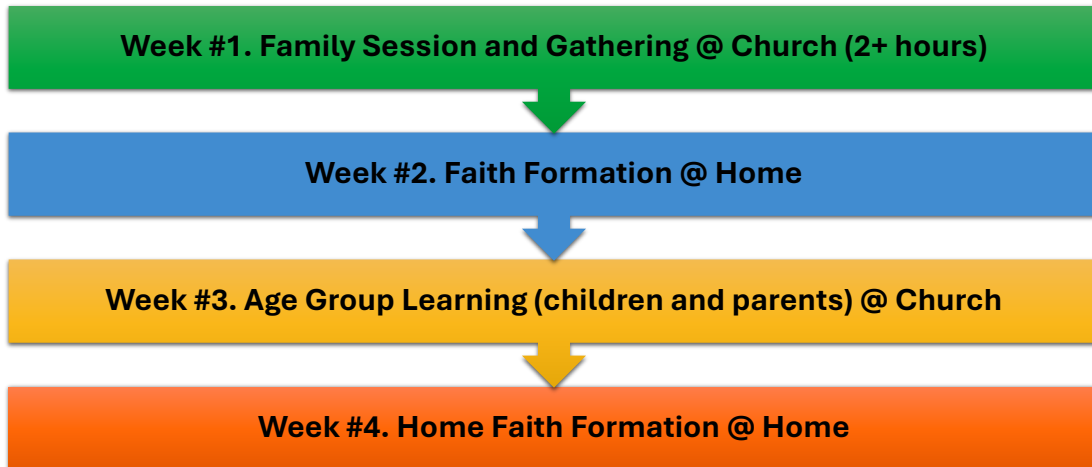
Family Learning Process

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



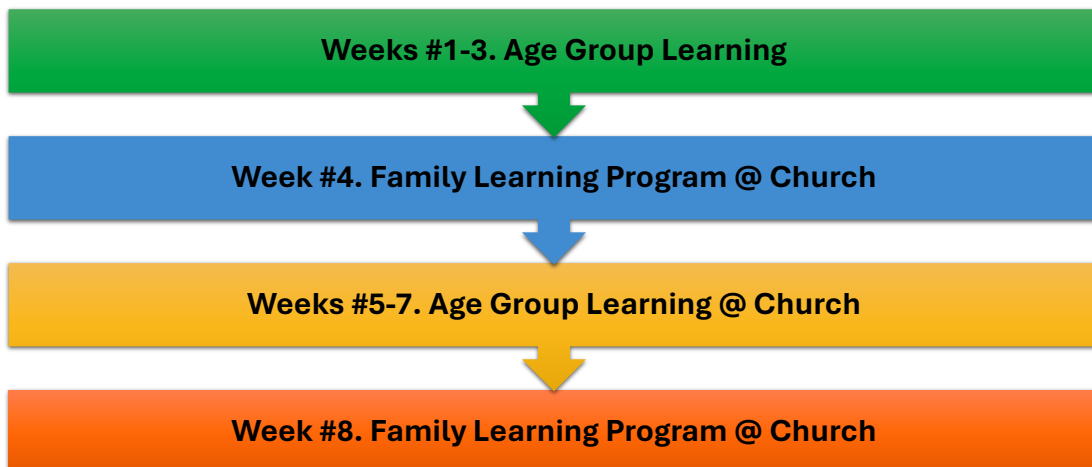
32

Primary Model with Monthly Theme



33

Integrated Model



34

