



NCCL

Parents & Families

AT THE CENTER OF FAITH FORMATION

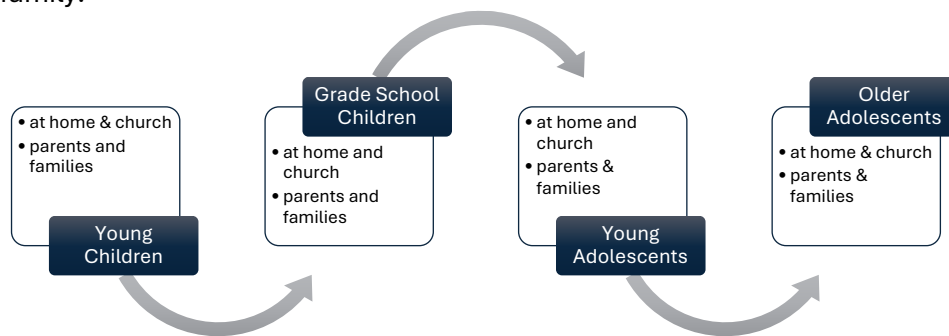
Project Website: <https://www.ncclcatholicfamilies.org>

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A Plan for Parent & Family Faith Formation

Goal

Develop a plan for parent and family faith formation that provides continuous and seamless faith formation – at home and parish – from birth through 19 years old for parents, children and adolescents, and the entire family.



Insights from Research for Developing a Plan

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 in promoting faith in children and youth include: a parents' personal faith and practice, a close and warm parent-child relationship, parent modeling and teaching a religious faith, and parent involvement in church life and Sunday worship. 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.

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.

Focus on Practice

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

Raising religious children is primarily a practice-centered process. Parents modeling religious practices is primary. Among the most important practices are:

- 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

Focus on Relationships

The quality of a parent's relationships with their children or teens 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.

Six Elements of a Family Faith Formation Plan

At each stage of life faith formation incorporates programs, activities, resources, and relationships that are developmentally appropriate and responsive to the diverse religiosities of parents and families – *Active Believers, Believers, and Inactive Believers.*

1. Forming the faith of the family at home – faith practices at home

For example:

- ✓ 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

2. Forming the faith of the family in the parish – engagement in parish life

For example:

- ✓ Sunday Mass
- ✓ parish sacramental celebrations
- ✓ celebration of Church year feasts and seasons through the year
- ✓ parish-wide service projects to those in need
- ✓ parish-wide gatherings

3. Equipping parents with practices and skills appropriate to each stage of childhood and adolescence

For example:

- ✓ knowledge about the growth and development at each life stage
- ✓ knowledge and effective practices and skills for parenting at each life stage
- ✓ practices and skills for developing quality relationships with children and adolescents
- ✓ family life skills

4. Equipping parents to be faith formers of their children and adolescents

For example:

- ✓ faith formation (theological and biblical) for parents
- ✓ skills and practices for forming faith of children and teens

5. Providing family catechesis for the entire family

For example:

- ✓ family learning programs
- ✓ family workshops
- ✓ Church seasons family festivals
- ✓ family-centered sacramental preparation

6. Fostering intergenerational relationships

For example:

- ✓ connecting families with other generations in worship and parish gatherings and events
- ✓ intergenerational faith forming experiences that incorporate the whole family
- ✓ intergenerational mentoring for parents, e.g., Baptism mentors

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				

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	

Ideas for Family Faith Formation

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.

Ideas for Parent Formation

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 address. 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.

Ideas for Family Learning with the Entire Family

Catechesis with families engages the whole family in faith formation experiences (parents and caregivers, young people, and grandparents) as the *primary* model for catechesis with families (monthly, twice-a-month, or weekly), as an *integrated* model within age group programming and/or within the seasons of the year (Advent, Lent, and more) and/or as family workshops throughout the year, and as family-centered *sacramental preparation* (Reconciliation and First Eucharist).

A Primary Model of Family Catechesis

Family catechesis as the **Primary Learning Model** for parents, children, and young teens is developed around monthly or yearly themes drawn from the Creed, sacraments, morality, justice and service, prayer and spiritual like, Church year seasons, Scripture, Christian practices, and more. Family catechesis models blend gathered experiences (at church or in family small groups in homes or other settings), at-home faith formation, and online resources. They can be structured and scheduled in several ways to respond the needs of a parish community, such as monthly, twice monthly, or weekly programming.

A Monthly Plan with a family session and at-home faith formation:

- Week #1. Family session at church or in small groups of families (90 minutes to 2 hours)
- Week #2. At-home faith formation with online resources
- Week #3. At-home faith formation with online resources

Week #4. At-home faith formation with online resources

A Monthly Plan with a family session, at-home practice, and age group learning:

Week #1. Family session at church or in small groups of families (90 minutes to 2 hours)

Week #2. At-home faith formation with online resources

Week #3. Age group learning session at church for children, young teens, and parents (90 minutes)

Week #4. At-home faith formation with online resources

A Twice Monthly Plan with a family session and at-home faith formation:

Week #1. Family session at church or in small groups of families (90 minutes to 2 hours)

Week #2. At-home faith formation with online resources

Week #3. Family session at church or in small groups of families (90 minutes to 2 hours)

Week #4. At-home faith formation with online resources

A Weekly Plan with family sessions at church or in small groups of families:

In the Weekly Plan the movements of the learning process are assigned to individual weeks. Over a month the entire learning process is experienced. Each session is usually one hour in length.

Week #1. A whole family learning experience with content and methods appropriate to all-ages

Week #2. An in-depth learning conducted in one of three ways: a) the whole family learning together with activities appropriate to all ages in the family; b) parallel groups (children, teens, parents) learning at the same time with content and learning activities appropriate to each age group; c) learning activity centers with whole family and age-specific learning activities

Week #3. A whole family activity to discover how to apply their learning to daily life using resources and activities provided in print or digital formats.

Week #4. At-home practice with online resources

An Integrated Model of Family Catechesis

An **Integrated Model** incorporates family catechesis within the age group curriculum for grades 1-8. The themes for family catechesis can flow from the age group curriculum or focus on core faith themes and Church year seasons. Here is an example of a 4-week sequence. (*This continues throughout the year.*)

Weeks #1-3. Age group catechesis

Week #4. Family learning experience

Weeks #5-7. Age group catechesis

Week #8. Family learning experience

A **Seasonal Plan** is built around the Church year seasons and feasts – Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, All Saints/All Souls, and more. Family catechesis sessions are incorporated into the schedule of the year so that age group programs and activities are not scheduled during a family catechesis program. A Season Plan is an excellent way to introduce family catechesis to the families and the parish community.

A **Workshop Plan** is designed around family life skills 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. A Workshop Plan can provide occasional family or parent-only gatherings throughout the year. Workshops can also be designed as mini-conferences (e.g., 3 hours) on a

Saturday or Sunday with a general session for the whole family and break-out sessions for parents, children, and teens.

Additional Family Catechesis Models

1. Family-centered sacramental preparation programs
2. Family cluster or small group learning programs
3. Family-centered vacation Bible school
4. Family-centered (small group or large group) lectionary-based Scripture reflection
5. Family retreats and camps
6. Family Bible study

Family Catechesis Designs: Content Themes

Themes and their topics, like the ones below, can become the focus of a year of family programming or topics can be combined into a multi-topic year of programming.

Theme: Catholic Sacraments

Baptism and Confirmation
Eucharist
Reconciliation
Anointing of the Sick
Marriage
Holy Orders

Theme: The Creed & Christian Beliefs

God, Father & Creator
Jesus Christ, Son of God
Jesus Christ: Death and Resurrection
Holy Spirit
Church
Communion of Saints, Life Everlasting

Theme: Moral Living

Loving God & Neighbor
Being Good Stewards
Care, Compassion, and Forgiveness
Honesty and Integrity
Living Faithfully

Church Year Feasts & Seasons

Advent: Preparing for the Messiah
Lent: Three Lenten Practices
Lent in Word and Symbol
Holy Week: Death and Resurrection of Jesus
Holy Week in Word, Ritual, and Symbol
Easter Vigil in Word and Symbol
Easter: New Life in Christ
Pentecost: We Believe in the Holy Spirit
All Saints and All Souls: We Believe in the Communion of Saints

Theme: Jesus and Discipleship through the Church Year Seasons

Preparing for the Messiah
Becoming a Disciple
Death of the Messiah
New Life in Christ
Identity of Christ
Living as Disciple

Theme: Catholic Social Teaching

Justice, Peace, and Care for Creation
Dignity of Human Life
Rights & Responsibilities
Peace
Option for the Poor
Care for God's Creation

Theme: Prayer

Call to Prayer
The Lord's Prayer
Praying through the Year: Advent and Christmas
Praying through the Year: Lent and Easter
Catholic Prayers and Devotions
The Rosary

Family Catechesis Learning Process

The family catechesis learning process involves five elements, conducted in an extended time format, e.g., 90 minutes to two hours.

1. A Shared Meal

Depending on the time of day, a meal begins the program, introducing people to the theme of the learning program, building community among the participants, doing table activities that model at-home faith practices, such as prayer or a table ritual.

2. A Shared Prayer Experience for All Families

3. An Opening Learning Experience for All Families

Introducing families to the topic of the program with content and methods appropriate to all-ages, such as:

- ritual or extended prayer service
- dramatic presentation of a Scripture passage or real life story
- storytelling or retelling a Scripture passage with contemporary examples
- witness presentations by church members (of all ages)
- learning games or TV game show formats
- film or media presentation using art/photos and music
- table group activity and discussion in intergenerational, family and/or age-groups.

4. In-depth Learning Experiences Conducted in One of Three Ways

Conducting in-depth learning activities that explore the theme or topic organized in one of three formats:

- a) family learning together with activities appropriate to all ages
- b) parallel groups (children, teens, parents) learning at the same time with content and learning activities appropriate to each age group
- c) learning activity centers designed for the entire family and/or age groups

5. Closing Activity for All Families

Guiding families in discovering how to apply their learning to daily life using resources and activities provided in print or digital formats.

6. Closing Prayer Experience

[For examples of family learning programs go to: <https://www.intergenerationalfaith.com/>]

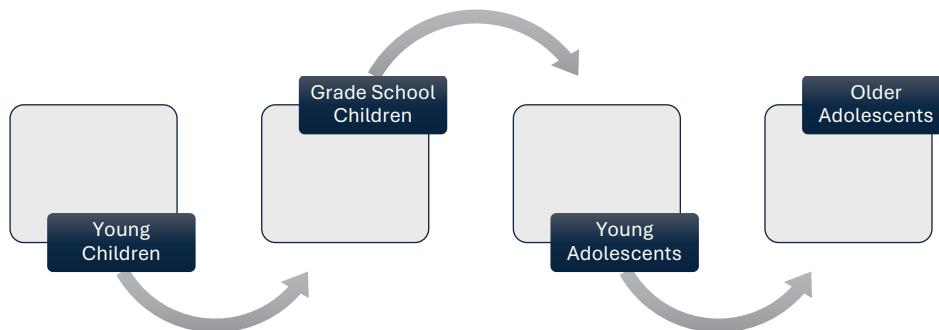
Select Ideas to Create a Family Faith Formation Plan

#1. Think and plan with a three year timeframe.

Developing your family faith formation plan – with all of the ideas you have generated – can be overwhelming. To help you select ideas, design programming, and implement your plan think in a three-year timeframe. This can guide you in determining your readiness and capacity to implement your plan.

- **Short-Term or Immediate Implementation (Year 1):** ideas that can be integrated into existing plans and programs or can be designed and implemented quickly in the first year.
- **Mid-Term Implementation (Year 2):** ideas that need more design time and that can be implemented within one or two years. These initiatives need to be sequenced for implementation and might involve piloting the new program or activity first before expanding to a wider audience.
- **Long-Term Implementation (Year 2-3):** ideas that need design time, piloting and testing, and then implementation over the several years. These initiatives are larger projects that may require substantive change thus requiring more time for planning and building capacity. The need to be introduced in stages over multiple years.

#2. Develop a blueprint of the whole plan. See the big picture first.



Select programs/activities/strategies/resources from the ideas you generated and/or ideas that you liked from other parishes. These are ideas that the team thinks have the most promise. **You are not deciding to do something yet, just identifying what your team thinks is promising. And remember some ideas may be implemented in Year 1 with others in Year 2 or 3.**

- Select ideas that specific to one life stage.

Young Children	Grade School Children	Middle School Adolescents	High School Adolescents

- Select ideas that apply to all four or multiple life stages.

Idea: _____

- All four life stages
- OR name the life stages:

Review to your blueprint to see how effectively you are addressing the six elements of the Framework for Family Faith Formation. How comprehensive is your “big picture?” Which area(s) need additional ideas?

1. *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)
2. *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)
3. *Equipping parents with practices and skills appropriate to each stage of childhood and adolescence* (workshops, webinars, support groups, resources)
4. *Equipping parents to be faith formers of their children and adolescents* (workshops, webinars, retreats, support groups, resources)
5. *Providing family catechesis for the entire family* (family learning programs, family workshops, Church seasons family festivals, family-centered sacramental preparation)
6. *Fostering intergenerational relationships* (connecting families with other generations through intergenerational faith forming experiences)

#3. Discern your approach for developing a family faith formation plan.

Discern as a group how you want to build your plan. (Remember you have a 3-year timeframe.) There are many ways to build a plan. Here are four approaches to consider as you develop your approach:

- **One Life Stage:** Select one life stage as a focus for one or more years of your plan OR focus on one life stage in each year of your plan (Year 1, Year 2, Year 3). For each life stage strive to have activities and programs for each of the six elements of the Framework for Family Faith Formation. (Include sacramental preparation, where appropriate)
- **Combined Life Stages:** Combine two life stages (children or adolescents) and identify ideas that apply to all families with children OR all families with adolescents. For each life stage strive to have activities and programs for each of the six elements of the Framework for Family Faith Formation. (Include sacramental preparation, where appropriate)
- **Formation across All Life Stages:** Select several of the six elements of the Framework and develop ideas for all four life stages. For example: a family at home focus across all four life stages OR a parent focus (parenting skill, parents as faith formers) for parents in all four life stages.
- **Family Catechesis Model:** Develop a family catechesis model that transforms catechesis with children through middle school and integrates the other elements of the Framework, such as parent formation and forming faith at home, into the family catechesis program.

#4. Select the programs, activities, strategies, and/or resources you want to incorporate into your three-year plan.

Now that you have chosen an approach, develop your plan. **Select** the programs, activities, strategies, and/or resources you want to incorporate into your plan. Use the six elements of the Framework to help you select activities (unless you chose the Family Catechesis Model, see below).

- 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
- 5) Providing family catechesis for the entire family
- 6) Fostering intergenerational relationships

Note: You will create and/or curate your programming in Step 3.

If you chose the **Family Catechesis Model**, discern how you want to implement your model. Consults the examples on pages 4 and 5 to guide your discussion.

- Will this become the **primary** model for catechesis with families (monthly, twice-a-month, or weekly)? What will this look like in your parish?
- Will this be an **integrated** model together with age group programming? What will this look like in your parish?

Outline your model and your plan for implementation (see the 3-year timeframe).

Note: You will create and/or curate content and activities for family catechesis in Step 3.

#5. Organize the implementation of your family faith formation plan into the 3-year timeframe.

On a sheet of easel paper, develop your 3-year implementation plan using the template below.

Short Term (Year 1)	Mid-Term (Year 1 or 2)	Long-Term (Year 2 or 3)
<i>We will implement this program or activity in our first year.</i>	<i>We need time for designing so we will implement this later in Year 1 or in Year 2.</i>	<i>We need time for designing and testing this program or activity so we will implement this in Year 2 or 3.</i>
Program or Activity	Program or Activity	Program or Activity
Program or Activity	Program or Activity	Program or Activity
Program or Activity	Program or Activity	Program or Activity

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

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 Families with Children Plan (Grades 1-8)

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

Design Programs and Activities

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.

1. Identify the Target Audience.

- Who are you designing for? What are their needs, interests, concerns, life issues, etc.?

2. Define the Goals (or Outcomes).

- What will parents or the family understand and be able to do by experiencing this activity?

3. Develop the Content or Theme.

- What is the content for the program, activity, or resource?
- Will you be able to curate existing programs, activities, and resources in print, audio, video, and online/digital formats?
- Will you need to create the program, activity, or resource?

4. Choose the One or More Formats to Offer the Program or Activity.

- **Formats:** On your own, mentoring, at home, small group, large group, community-based, hybrid, online (see descriptions on next page)
- **Combined:** One program; multiple formats

5. Schedule the Programs and Activities.

- What is the timeline for implementing the program, activity, or resource? Dates? Times?
- When will it be offered? Dates? Times?

6. Find Leaders.

- How many leaders will you need and what will they do?
- How will you find and invite leaders?
- How will you prepare leaders for their work?

7. Identify the Need for Additional Resources and Costs.

- What additional resources are needed to implement the program, activity, or resource?
- What is the cost to design and implement it?

8. Promote the Program/Activity/Strategy/Resource.

- How will you promote and launch the program, activity, or resource?
- How will you promote this on the parish website and social media.
- How will use existing communication channels, such as the bulletin, email, and texting?
- Will you create printed or digital material (brochure, poster, flyer, etc.)?
- Will you need a registration or sign-up system?

9. Evaluate the Program/Activity/Strategy/Resource.

- How and when you will receive feedback from people on the program/activity/ strategy/resource?

Faith Formation Formats

A variety of formats can be utilized in programming, providing a way to offer a diversity of programs in different formats and to offer one program or experience in multiple formats, expanding the scope of program offerings and providing people with more options to participate.

1. On your own
2. Mentoring
3. Small group learning
4. Large group learning
5. Community-based learning
6. Hybrid (online and in-person)
7. Online
8. One program, multiple formats

1. 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

2. 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

3. 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

4. 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

5. 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.

6. Hybrid

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.

One way to develop a hybrid model is to begin in-person and then deepen it with online programming.

Worship & Online Formation

- Participate in weekly worship (in-person or live streamed).
- Engage in faith forming activities using an online playlist on Sunday's theme: prayers, readings, video, podcast, art, music, creative activities, conversations, action ideas, etc.

In-Person & Online Formation

- Meet in-person once per month (or every other week).
- Engage in online faith formation for the other weeks using a playlist on the theme.

In-Person & Online & Video Meetings

- Week #1: Meet in-person for the program.
- Week #2: Engage in online faith forming experiences using a playlist on the theme.
- Week #3: Continue with the playlist learning on the theme.
- Week #4: Conduct a video meeting (Zoom) for small groups or age groups or families to discuss and apply the online learning.

In-Person & Live Streamed or Video & Online

- Week #1: Meet in-person for the program.
- Week #2: Engage in online faith forming experiences using a playlist on the theme.
- Week #3: Conduct a livestream presentation or demonstration or prerecorded video (using Zoom, Facebook Live, or YouTube Live) on the theme of the month's program.
- Week #4: Continue with the playlist learning on the theme.

A second way to develop a hybrid model is to begin with online programming leading to in-person experiences. This approach is known as *Flipped Learning* in which direct instruction moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space online, and the group space is transformed into a dynamic interactive learning environment where the leader/teacher guides participants as they creatively discuss, practice, and apply the content. Here is a basic outline of a 4-week model.

Online & Small Group Gatherings

- Week #1: Engage in online learning on the theme.
- Week #2: Participate in a small group gathering to discuss and apply the learning (in-person or through video conferencing)
- Week #3: Engage in online learning on the theme.
- Week #4: Participate in a small group gathering to discuss and apply the learning (in-person or through video conferencing)

Flipped Learning is very helpful when it is difficult to gather people, such as preparation for a sacrament. We can *prepare* people online with the appropriate content (experiences, activities, video/audio, and resources); then *engage* them in-person for the event or program; and *sustain and apply* the experience through online formation.

- On Your Own: Engage people with a learning playlist—watching videos, reading short articles, praying, writing reflections in a journal—on the theme.
- In a Small Group: Have people participate in one small group experience (online) to discuss the content in the playlist and what they are learning.
- In a Large Group: Involve people in a monthly meeting for community sharing, interactive activities, short presentations, and ideas for living faith.

7. Online

Parishes can develop fully online catechetical programming (asynchronous) by offering on your own faith formation using the abundance of online programs and resources for all ages. Churches can develop a complete 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. The online experiences can include prayer activities, daily Bible readings, daily devotions, study resources, videos, and service activities.

8. One Program Designed in Multiple Formats

With multiple ways to program in physical, online, and hybrid spaces, one program or experience can be designed in all three spaces, increasing the availability to a wider audience of people while not increasing the number of unique programs a parish creates. The choice is no longer whether to participate or not, but which option best suits a person's time, schedule, and learning preferences. Here is an example – same program, multiple ways to experience it.

1. *Large group physical gathering:* People gather at church and a leader facilitates the program—making a presentation (or having a guest presenter) or showing a video, providing time for people to read and reflect, and guiding small groups in discussing the content.
2. *Small group physical gathering:* People gather in small groups in homes or coffee shops or other conducive setting, watch the video, read and reflect on the content, and discuss the content.
3. *Small group hybrid:* People watch the video on their own, then gather online in a small group (Zoom or other video conferencing platform) to reflect and discuss the content.
4. *Online with interaction:* People complete the sessions on their own and share reflections in a Facebook group (asynchronous) or meet on Zoom to discuss the program (synchronous).
5. *Online independent:* People complete the learning program on their own.