Re-envisioning Family Faith Formation for Today’s Families

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Changing Context

COVID-19 World
- COVID-19 has disrupted every aspect of life.
- We are not going back to normal – life before March 1st.
- We are no longer talking about months but years of COVID-19.
- We will not be able to gather people as we have in the past.
- We will not be able to use older models of church life and faith formation in today’s context.

Changing Family Life
- There is more religious diversity from engaged families through unaffiliated families.
- Families are less religious today than previous generations.
- There is a steady decline in faith transmission, practice, and participation.
- Families experience higher levels of stress and pressure. Many feel overwhelmed & overscheduled.
- Many families are financially insecure or stressed.

Three Big Topics

1. The central role of families in faith transmission, and the practices that are most significant in forming faith in children and teens
2. Approaches and strategies for forming faith at home; providing faith forming experiences at church; and connecting with families at home through digital media and methods
3. Designing faith formation in the COVID-19 world using online and hybrid models, and the practices and approaches that will work with families during this time
Fundamental Shift

What if we fashioned faith formation around the family?

What do we believe about families & faith?

- God is actively present in family life.
- Parents and the family are the most important religious influence on religious transmission.
- Faith is formed through the day-to-day religious practices of the family and the ways parents model their faith and share it.
- Faith is formed when there is a substantial investment of thought, time, and intimacy by parents in faith transmission.
- Faith is formed in relationships – at home and in the intergenerational faith community.
- Faith is formed in developmentally-appropriate ways over time.
Holistic Faith Formation

Intergenerational

Family

Peers or Life Stage

What’s Your Church’s Approach

What’s Your Congregation’s Approach to Families?

1. We ensure that families in our congregations and communities, including families in need, sharing stories in their own, and moving in them.
2. We facilitate practices and families by expecting them to be up to that potential and helping them to form relationships.
3. We provide support and advocacy when families need it.
4. We share power with families, making them feel as if the partners by giving them support and decisions to make and collaborating with them to solve problems and move goals.
5. We encourage families to explore possibilities by connecting them with other people, ideas, and opportunities to help them grow.
6. We offer regular gatherings opportunities for learning, sharing, service, and relationship building, and more throughout the year.
7. We engage families together with the wider community for learning, worship, service, relationship building, and more throughout the year.
8. We find ways forward families at home with support, resources, and activities to develop family that grow in faith.
9. We sustain families by helping them develop the practices and skills for healthy family life.
10. We take parents with the leadership and with effective parenting and forming faith in young people.
11. We engage parents as leaders and contributors to the congregation and in the community.
12. We design resources, programs, and activities that complement and strengthen the role of families as faith formation.
13. We recognize the family as the primary agent of faith formation across the life cycle.
14. We collaborate the existence of social justice work in the example, best of families and their young people.
Part One
Insights from Research

Article: https://www.usccb.org/committees/evangelization-catechesis/leadership-institute-catechetical-sunday-2020

Research Finding #1.

Parents are the most significant influence on the religious and spiritual outcomes of young people.
One of the most basic suggestions of our findings is that young adults arrive at a sense of their fundamental identity and worldview not by weighing all possible intellectual arguments for and against a proposed way of life, but rather by roughly adopting the worldview of those mentors who left the deepest impression upon them—and who loved them and cared for them the most. It should come as no surprise, then, that the emergence of the new generation of dedicated young Catholics will rise and fall with the choices of their parents.

*(American Catholic Religious Parenting, Burtkus and Smith)*

The single most powerful force in a child’s religious formation is the spiritual personality of the parent. We know the parental factors that make a significant difference in promoting faith in children and youth include:

- parents’ personal faith and practice
- a close and warm parent-child relationship
- parent modeling and teaching a religious faith
- parent involvement in church life and Sunday worship
- grandparent religious influence and relationship
- family conversations about faith
- family faith religious practices including praying, reading the Bible, serving others, and celebrating holidays and rituals
Research Finding #2.

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.

The primary mechanisms by which Catholic identity becomes rooted in children's lives are not Catholic schooling or sacramental preparation, but rather 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.
This is all to say that the definitive causal agents in the religious and spiritual outcomes of American youth are neither clergy nor youth ministers, neither educators nor the voices of popular culture and media, but parents.

Parents have only one good and hopefully effective way to raise children to understand and carry on their family’s religion (or perhaps return to it someday after a period of disaffection). That is for parents simply 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.
Research Finding #3.

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

We have discovered through research that certain faith practices make a significant difference in nurturing the faith of children and teens at home.

“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”
1. Reading the Bible as a family and encouraging young people to read the Bible regularly
2. Praying together as a family and encouraging young people to pray personally
3. Serving people in need as a family and supporting service activities by young people
4. Eating together as a family
5. Having family conversations about faith
6. Talking about faith, religious issues, questions, doubts
7. Ritualizing family moments and milestone experiences
8. Celebrating holidays and church year seasons at home
9. Providing moral instruction
10. Being involved in a faith community and participating regularly in Sunday worship as a family

Research Finding #4

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.
1. Parents cultivate relationships of warmth and love which makes everything else possible.

2. Parents balance religious firmness with religious flexibility in their parenting to maintain more positive relationships with their children.

3. Parents balance desire for religious continuity with children’s agency. They transmit their faith to their children while honoring their children’s 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.

4. Parents talk with their children about religious matters during the week. This is one of the most powerful mechanisms for the success or failure of religious transmission to children.

5. Parents practice an “authoritative” parenting style. Parents maintain and enforce 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.

6. Parents listen more and preach less – conversations are more youth-centered than parent-centered.
Sources for Finding #4


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Pope Francis, *Joy of the Gospel*

The family is the primary setting for socialization, since it is where we first learn to relate to others, to listen and share, to be patient and show respect, to help one another and live as one. The task of education is to make us sense that the world and society are also our home; it trains us how to live together in this greater home. In the family, we learn closeness, care and respect for others. . . . Every day the family has to come up with new ways of appreciating and acknowledging its members (276).
Using the Four Insights to Design

How can you **Encourage** parents to grow in faith and become faith formers; **Equip** parents to incorporate faith practices into family life at home; **Engage** parents in education and formation, as well as the whole family in faith forming experiences and programs?

1. Assess how well your current practice addresses the 4 findings.
2. Identify ministries & programming that need to be redesigned.
3. Create new initiatives to engage, encourage, and equip parents and the whole family at home, church, and school.


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Part Two
Programming Approaches
Ideas and Strategies
Faith Formation Programming Approaches

- Gathered Programming (church, camp, mission trip, retreat center, community places)
- Blended Program Gathered & Online
- Online Programming (individual, families, small groups)

Family Faith Formation in 2020-21

- Live Programming
- Small Group Gatherings
- Online Programming
- Families @Home
Digital Tools for Family Programming

- Video Conferencing & Streaming: Zoom, Facebook Live, YouTube Live
- Group Interaction: Facebook Groups
- Communication Tools: Email, Texting
- Social Media Tools: Facebook, Instagram
- Online Learning Platforms: Edmodo, Google Classroom
- Digital Learning Apps

Website Builder
Weebly.com
Facebook Groups

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Events
Videos
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Welcome to AdEspresso University! Here's the top five ways to achieve success with AdEspresso:
1) If you have any technical/billing/account issues please contact our customer success team via the help button in the bottom right of the app or email support@adespresso.com. This Facebook group covers...

Zoom Video Conferencing

Facebook Live Streaming

Streaming Mass:
Reaching parishioners online while pews are closed

YouTube LIVE STREAMING
Low Tech Delivery Systems

Family Formation Plan
Developmentally-Appropriate

0-5 Young Children
At Home
At Church
With Parents

6-10 Older Children
At Home
At Church
With Parents

10-14 Young Adolescents
At Home
At Church
With Parents

14-19 Older Adolescents
At Home
At Church
With Parents
Family Formation Plan
Activities for Each Life Stage

1. Faith Practices appropriate to the age
2. Seasons of the year
3. Rituals and milestones
4. Learning the tradition
5. Prayer and spiritual formation
6. Reading the Bible
7. Service, justice, care for creation

Reaching Families & Parents

Through the day: mealtimes, car times, morning and bedtime, exits and entries, family sharing times, waiting for... times

Through key family moments: good times and hard times, times of joy and sorrow

Through the year: church year seasons, holidays, rituals and celebrations—birthdays, anniversaries, etc.

Through the lifecycle: milestones and rites of passage

Finding the spaces and times in family life
Programming in 4-Month Seasons
Sept – Dec | Jan – April | May - Aug

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Practical Strategies: Family

Whole Family Programs
Event-Centered: Sacraments & Milestones
Family Experiments
Faith Practice of the Month
Connect to Sunday Mass
Seasons @Home and @Church
# Four-Week Program Plan

**Week 1** - Live Stream Presentation/Demonstration on the Theme (synchronous)

**Week 2 & 3** - Home Family Experience (asynchronous)
- Individual family or groupings of families
- Online playlist of age-appropriate faith formation activities on the theme
- Resources for parent enrichment on the theme

**Week 4** - Live Online Session to Share and Present Projects (synchronous)

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# Extended Program Plan

**Welcome & Opening Prayer**

**Part 1**  All Ages Introduction to the Theme (live stream)
    All Ages Experience (live stream)

**Part 2**  Demonstration of Home Activities (live stream)
    At Home Family Activity (resources online)
    (age appropriate, together or individualized)
    At Home Adult Presentation (video or live stream)

**Part 3**  Quick Sharing from Participants using Facebook Page or Photos on Instagram
    Closing Reflections & Prayer/Ritual (live stream)
Program Example: Called to Pray

Gathering and Opening Prayer

Welcome to Prayer Program

Prayer Experiences: Demonstrate Live & Practice @Home

• Activity 1: Creating a Space for Prayer
• Activity 2: Praying with Scripture
• Activity 3: Praying with the Psalms
• Activity 4: Intercessory Prayer
• Activity 5: The Jesus Prayer

Making Prayer an Essential Part of Family Life

Closing Prayer

Event-Centered Programming

Preparing

• What types of experiences, programming, activities, and resources will you develop to prepare people for the event?
• Independent, small group, large group
• Blended
• Playlists

Experiencing

• How will you design the event?
• How will you engage age groups, families, and the faith community?

Living

• How will you sustain/extend the event?
• What types of experiences, programs, activities, and resources will you offer people?
• Independent, small group, large group
• Blended
• Playlists
7-Day or 30-Day Family Experiments

1. Focus on a practice.
2. Curate (mobile) resources to explain and demonstrate the practice (video, print, how-to recipe).
3. Publish resources on a web page.
4. Have families find a time to do the practice each day and schedule their time.
5. Do the practice.
6. Remind people daily with text message.
7. Encourage people to share photos or videos on a Instagram # or in a Facebook Group.

Faith Practices - Theme for the Month

Themes
- Prayer
- Reading the Bible
- Christian Practices
- Service, Care for Creation, Social Justice
- Church Year Feasts & Seasons
- Moral Values
- Etc.

Design
1. Teach: Key Content (video, live stream, small group or large group program)
2. Demonstrate: “How to” do this: personal, family
3. Resources: playlist of faith forming activities on the theme
Connect Sunday Worship to the Home

Weekly Lectionary-Based Playlist on the Website
✓ family conversation questions
✓ weekly table ritual
✓ podcast or video of the sermon with a study guide for the parents,
✓ children’s creative Bible activities
✓ storybooks
✓ videos presenting the Bible story
✓ daily prayer
✓ weekly family devotion


Symbol of the Week

Signs of the Week


Take a few moments as a parent to reflect on the Gospel calling the disciples. www.catholic.org/medium/article/18947-the-gospel-reading-luke-5-1-11.html


The Call of the Disciples

Children’s Storybook

Tangled in a Empty Bag: Jesus and the Disciples
By Sarah M. Hernandez

The Call of the Disciples


Symbol of the Week

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The Call of the Disciples
Celebrate the Seasons

- Identify a monthly seasonal event (church year or calendar year) and developing a webpage for each season
- Organize a seasonal family festival / gathering (virtual or physical) to support the seasonal plan

Jan: ML King Jr. (justice and peace, serving)
Feb: Valentine’s Day (-loving)
March: Lent (praying, fasting, almsgiving)
April: Earth Day (caring for creation)
May: Mother’s Day (honor parents, love, care)
June: Father’s Day (honor parents, love, care)
July: Independence Day (freedom)
August: Back to school (new beginnings)
Sept: Fall Harvest (grateful, generosity)
Oct: St. Francis (care for creation and animals)
Nov: Thanksgiving (grateful, generous)
Dec: Advent and Christmas
Designing Playlists: Menu Approach

- Read
- Watch
- Participate
- Listen
- Pray and Reflect
- Live or Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season of the Year</th>
<th>Activities for the Home</th>
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<td>February: Playing through Lent</td>
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<td>March/April: Talk About the Shabbatot</td>
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<td>April: New Life</td>
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Playlist for a Church Season at Home

- Video: "Lent in 3 Minutes" introduction to Lent video from Busted Halo
- Video: Ash Wednesday and Lent from Chuck Knows Church videos
- Daily Lenten prayers
- Daily Scripture readings
- Lenten calendar with short activities for each
- Ash Wednesday service at home
- Lenten service projects at home, at church, in the community and world
- Daily devotionals for Lent for children and for adults/parents
- Video commentary for each Sunday Gospel reading in Lent
- Creative activities for each Sunday of Lent and Holy Week
- Weekly symbol and ritual activity
- Rituals: Stations of the Cross
- Children's storybooks on the themes of each Sunday's lectionary readings from Storypath (http://storypath.episcopal.edu)
Designing Playlists: Learning Process

1. Engage
2. Explore
3. Create
4. Perform/ Present

Learning Process Approach

**Week 1. Engage the learner in the topic or theme (synchronous)**
- Synchronous live streamed session to “gather” the group, introduce the topic/theme, and show how it connects to the life of the learner. Methods: presentation, demonstration, video, storytelling, etc.

**Week 2. Explore the topic of theme (asynchronous)**
- Learners select one or more activities that go deeper into the topic or theme. This can take many forms (video, audio, text, reading, prayer or ritual, etc.)

**Week 3. Practice and demonstrate learning (asynchronous)**
- Learners use a variety of methods to create an activity, individually or with others in the group, that demonstrate learning. Learning apps can provide a creative way to design an activity.

**Week 4. Perform and present the project (synchronous)**
Family Faith Formation Playlist

Holy Week
An Introduction to Holy Week in "Three Minutes"

A Catholic Guide to Holy Week:

Learn more about the meaning of the Holy Week symbols read for “Holy” in online data.

• "Holy Wednesday, Good Friday and Easter Night," and then Sunday goes in week.

Just for Parents: A Virtual Stations of the Cross

Stations of the Cross Activity

Provide a link to the Stations of the Cross in order and give a link to set. For the parents' guide on how to make them.

Holy Week Storytelling Activity

Select the parables and put them into story. Share these including stories of Holy Week and Easter.

Holy Thursday - Last Supper Craft Activity

Make a Last Supper craft for Holy Thursday/meal on the Sunday. Emphasize that the Last Supper was Jesus first major feast or gathering.

For instructions, go online.


Symbol of the Week

Sailboat (Little Dippers) is a symbol for the disciples. Play Dine, 3-5 minutes. Pass a boat. Describe the symbols. Share the boating portion of the week. Talk about the parables of the disciples. Then tell the story of the disciples following Jesus.

The Call of the Disciples

Children's Storybook

How much is a Hot Dog Bun Worth the Courage to be Who You Are?

by Maria Stammel (written for ages 4-11)

Like other living things, the fishermen were working on their nets and praying, but they were also on the lookout for Jesus. Jesus said, "Peace be with you." The disciples all sat down for a meal, which was a custom in Jewish culture. As they were eating, Jesus told them the story of the Parable of the Lost Sheep.

Near the end of the meal, Jesus said, "I have come to call the sinners to repentance." The fishermen were surprised, but they agreed to follow him. He told them that even though they had sinned, they could still be forgiven and start a new life.

The fishermen were overjoyed and immediately followed him. They left their nets and boats and began to follow Jesus. He taught them about love, mercy, and forgiveness.

Jesus then went on to teach them about friendship, compassion, and how to love others. He told them that those who love others will be happy.

The fishermen were so inspired by Jesus' teachings that they continued to follow him and spread his message throughout the land. They became known as the apostles, and their story continues to inspire people to this day.
Michigan Conference UMC
Children’s Ministry
“Faith & Family Playlist”
Rev. Kathy Pittenger

First Presbyterian, Stillwater, OK
https://www.fpcfaithfulfamilies.com
E-Newsletter

ADVENT EXPERIMENT OPTIONS
Pick one option below for your Advent Experiment

Families with Children/Youth

c. Every day, read daily Bible readings with the Psalm 31: 31
Gather your family at bedtime, morning, or any time you are, and read the Psalm 31: 31 with your kids. Or you can send prayers for each day.

c. Advent Bible Reading
Read the remaining readings from the Holy Scriptures. You can send prayers for each reading.

c. Advent Bible Reading and Advent Reflections
Read the remaining readings from the Holy Scriptures and write down your reflections.

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Adults

d. Every day, read daily Bible readings with the Psalm 31: 31
Gather your family at bedtime, morning, or any time you are, and read the Psalm 31: 31 with your kids. Or you can send prayers for each day.

d. Advent Bible Reading
Read the remaining readings from the Holy Scriptures. You can send prayers for each reading.

d. Advent Bible Reading and Advent Reflections
Read the remaining readings from the Holy Scriptures and write down your reflections.

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For All Ages

e. Advent Experiment Photo Challenge: One photo a day of how you are experiencing Advent in your home. You can send the photo to the Parish Office and get a chance to win a prize. The photo should be sent by the 10th of each month.

f. Advent Experiment Photo Challenge: One photo a day of how you are experiencing Advent in your home. You can send the photo to the Parish Office and get a chance to win a prize. The photo should be sent by the 10th of each month.

9/17/20

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Practical Strategies: Parents

Parent Lifecycle Workshops / Webinars / Online Resources

Family Life / Parenting Skills Development Workshops / Webinars / Online Resources

Add a Parent Component to Existing Programs (Embed) – VBS, Children and Youth Program, etc.

Parent Mentors

Support Groups (life cycle, kindred)

Script a Plan for Parents at Each Stage of Life

Empowering Parents

Key Content

Faith Forming Skills & Practices

Knowledge & Skills for Parenting

Parental Faith Formation
Family Formation Plan
Developmentally-Appropriate

- 0-5 Young Children
  At Home
  At Church
  With Parents
- 6-10 Older Children
  At Home
  At Church
  With Parents
- 10-14 Young Adolescents
  At Home
  At Church
  With Parents
- 14-19 Older Adolescents
  At Home
  At Church
  With Parents