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Family Faith Formation Frequently Asked Questions

What is Family Faith Formation?

Family Faith Formation is a new, more family-inclusive model of religious education for the parish that will begin the middle of September 2018.

Why Family Faith Formation?

In a document written by the U. S. Catholic Bishops, titled *Our Hearts Burning Within Us*, the bishops asked all parishes to provide more opportunities for Adult Religious Education. One of the ways they recommend doing this is with a family or inter-generational model for religious education. And so we will move away from a graded model of religious education (weekly classes for each grade) to a family model with monthly classes for the whole family, but particularly for families with children grades Kindergarten through Grade 8.

Why Family Faith Formation is important?

- Children won't simply learn the faith, they'll live it in the home as parents learn how to develop a vibrant Catholic family life.
- Mass attendance is strengthened as parents deepen their commitment to the Faith.
- Builds parish community as adult friendships are formed.
- More flexible than weekly religious education classes for parents and catechists alike.
- Children witness their parents engaging with the Faith as they collaborate on monthly lessons.
- Parents receive deep adult faith formation and support to share the Faith with their families.

Who should attend?

The program requires that at least one parent attend the monthly meeting with their child(ren) as the family formation is primarily led at home by parents and facilitated by materials, support and information from parish staff members. At the monthly meetings, the parents will work with the family catechist while the children will go with our children's catechists to learn one of the two monthly lessons provided with the curriculum.

When does Family Faith Formation start and when does it meet?

Family Faith Formation starts on Wednesday, September 19 at 6:30 pm in the Gathering Space at church. After the initial kick off meeting, families will meet once a month on the second Wednesday of the month from 6:30 – 8:00 pm. Here are our meeting dates:

Monthly Wednesday – 6:30 – 8:00 pm	Special Sunday – 9:00 – 10:15 am
September 19	September 30
October 10	October 28
November 14	November 18
December 12	December 16
January 9	January 27
February 13	February 24
March 13	March 17
April 10	April 14
May 8	May 19

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How much does the program cost to attend?

Couples with no children: \$50.

Families registering with one child (K-8): \$75

Families registering with two children (K-8): \$150

Families registering with three or more children (K-8): \$200

What program are you using?

We will be using *A Family of Faith* by Sophia Institute. This is a 4 year program that focuses on the 4 pillars of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. This year, we will focus on Pillar One.

What will you cover the first year of *A Family of Faith*?

This year Nativity of Mary will start with *A Family of Faith* Volume I: The Profession of Faith. Families learn this year about events that took place thousands of years ago. But the story of salvation history is not just in the past: it continues to take place in our lives in a deeply personal way. In the beginning, God created the universe out of nothing, and God continues to create throughout all ages each and every time a human person is conceived. And just as God spoke to our fathers in faith and showed them His plan of salvation, God still speaks to us and calls us to become part of the story of His saving love. These are not distant events to be memorized, but rather life-giving truths to be lived each day. God has called us each by name—this is the story of salvation history. This is our story!

Month-by-Month Outline for Year One: The Creed: The Profession of Faith

- September: Man's capacity for God
- October: God comes to meet man
- November: Man's response to God
- December: God the Father
- January: Jesus Christ, Part I
- February: Jesus Christ, Part II
- March: The Holy Spirit
- April: The Holy Catholic Church
- May: Life Everlasting

Does *A Family of Faith* replace weekly religious education classes?

Yes, it does. We are offering the monthly *A Family of Faith* as an alternative to traditional weekly religious education classes. While parents are going through each month's materials, the children are doing one of two monthly lessons with trained catechists. The parents deliver the second lesson to their own children anytime that is convenient for them.

What if the parent doesn't know the Faith well, or know how to teach?

A Family of Faith is completely turn-key for the parents, giving them the easy-to-understand content and step-by-step instructions for each activity, helping them to gain knowledge of the Faith and confidence as they teach it. Various tools are also available to help parents turn potentially problematic situations into successes, such as what to do when a child asks a question you do not know.

Shouldn't the religious education of children be left to the parish?

Since the current religious education model is struggling to transform family life, and since many young people who go through traditional religious education are leaving the faith, we are proposing a new model (which is actually an ancient model) where the parish focuses on catechizing the parents in order to strengthen parent/child engagement in the Faith. This increases the likelihood that a child will receive an authentic education in the Faith and develop

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into a knowledgeable and practicing Catholic. Countless studies have shown that parental engagement with the child is the single most effective way to develop young people into disciples of Christ. We are also offering this to any parishioner who wants a deeper understanding of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Wouldn't we be better off just maintaining the status quo?

While it is true that some parents will likely decide to offer no instruction than to participate in this program, the vast majority of families who use the program are finding *A Family of Faith* to be far more flexible, enabling them to transform the family activities they already do into encounters with God. Parents are able to enter into those “teachable moments” of everyday life. *A Family of Faith* leads parents into a conversion to Jesus Christ, which is beneficial to the parish, but most of all to the children they are raising.

Is there a lot of work involved for families? How much time will this program take?

No. There are two lessons to teach each month, along with a variety of family and child activities. One lesson will be taught by trained catechists while the parents learn from the family catechist once a month. Then, the families will cover the second lesson at home. Each lesson should take no more than 30-45 minutes to complete, and requires minimal preparation on the part of the parent.

For what age children has this program been developed?

Because this program focuses on teaching the faith to parents and helping them make it an organic part of family life, it is perfect for parents with children of all ages. For example, a monthly feature called “Your Catholic Home” gives specific advice for ways to make the Faith a regular part of each day. The Children’s Activity Books are recommended for children in grades K-8, and features engaging activities at various grade levels. Parents can skip the activities they believe are too elementary or too advanced for their child. This year, we will be also offering the Edge program for our middle school students which is well-received middle school faith formation program.

Does my child have to be a strong reader?

No. Although readings and written activities are offered, the Children’s Activity Book and Parent Guide offer a wide variety of activities using numerous strategies to impart and assess knowledge that do not rely on reading or writing.

How many meetings are required per month?

We recommend you attend the monthly family catechesis meetings offered on the 2nd Wednesday of the month. The Wednesday night gatherings are 90-minute session for adults with breakout sessions for children in grades K-5 with child catechists and a Middle School group. We are also offering a second 90-minute community meeting for everyone in the family before Sunday 10:30 Mass near the end of the month which is an optional gathering. The 90-minute session catechizes parents and helps them to deepen their knowledge of the Faith. Entire families can attend the 90-minute community meeting, which is meant to help ensure accountability and build community through games and other family activities.

How does the program handle sacramental preparation?

A Family of Faith does not treat the Sacraments as isolated events and is not designed to serve as preparation for receiving the Sacraments. Students grow in their spiritual journey through regular activities with their parents, prayer, Mass attendance, and participation in parish life. However, this program is an excellent part of sacramental preparation as the child naturally

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matures and shows evidence of understanding. Sacramental preparation programs are offered in addition to the content presented in *A Family of Faith*. Parents may register their children for First Reconciliation/First Communion and Confirmation at the same website as the Family Faith Formation Registration website.

How will I know my children are learning?

You will undoubtedly see your children learn as they memorize Scripture verses and are able to define key words of our Catholic Faith. Children will demonstrate in conversations their understanding of concepts of the Faith, and you'll see them begin to live their Faith through service projects, an enriched prayer life, and a deepening relationship with Jesus Christ. The child's desire to know, love, and serve Jesus is proof that they are learning and becoming a disciple of Christ.

What about my younger children?

Running at the same time as Family Faith Formation is our Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program which meets weekly for children ages 3-6. The registration is in addition to Family Faith Formation and is not included in the price. At this time, we cannot accommodate children under the age of 3.