

Why Engaging Families Is More Important Than Ever And How To Do It Well!

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Our Sunday Visitor
Seattle
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Whatever our present circumstances our mission remains unchanged...

“...do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and their children after them.”

Deuteronomy 4:9

This time poses the greatest leadership crisis any of us have faced. It can be a moment of amazing creativity, though it also is going to be a time of unavoidable pain and loss. We will discover that while many resources are suddenly unavailable to us, the most essential resource is still available, and the most important reality has not changed. The reality is that God has called us to a time like this, given us a mission and a community to serve alongside, and **we still have the most important resource, which is trust in the context of love.** Everything depends on how quickly and thoroughly we move to build on that resource, starting today.

(Andy Crouch, Kurt Keilhacker, Dave Blanchard)

*To Gather The Children
In The Wilderness To
Teach Them What They
Needed To Know For
Their Salvation.”*

Our Lady Of Good Help To Adele Brise, 1859



Introductions

- Who are you?
- What is your position or ministry?
- What is your experience in ministry with your families?

PICK A SHARING QUESTION:

- What question do you have about a family model?
- What do you think is a challenge about a family catechetical model?
- What do you think is a benefit about a family catechetical model?

My story and how it connects with a Family Model



Catholic
Education...
as a student



Saint Joseph and Saint Anne ROOM 209 1962

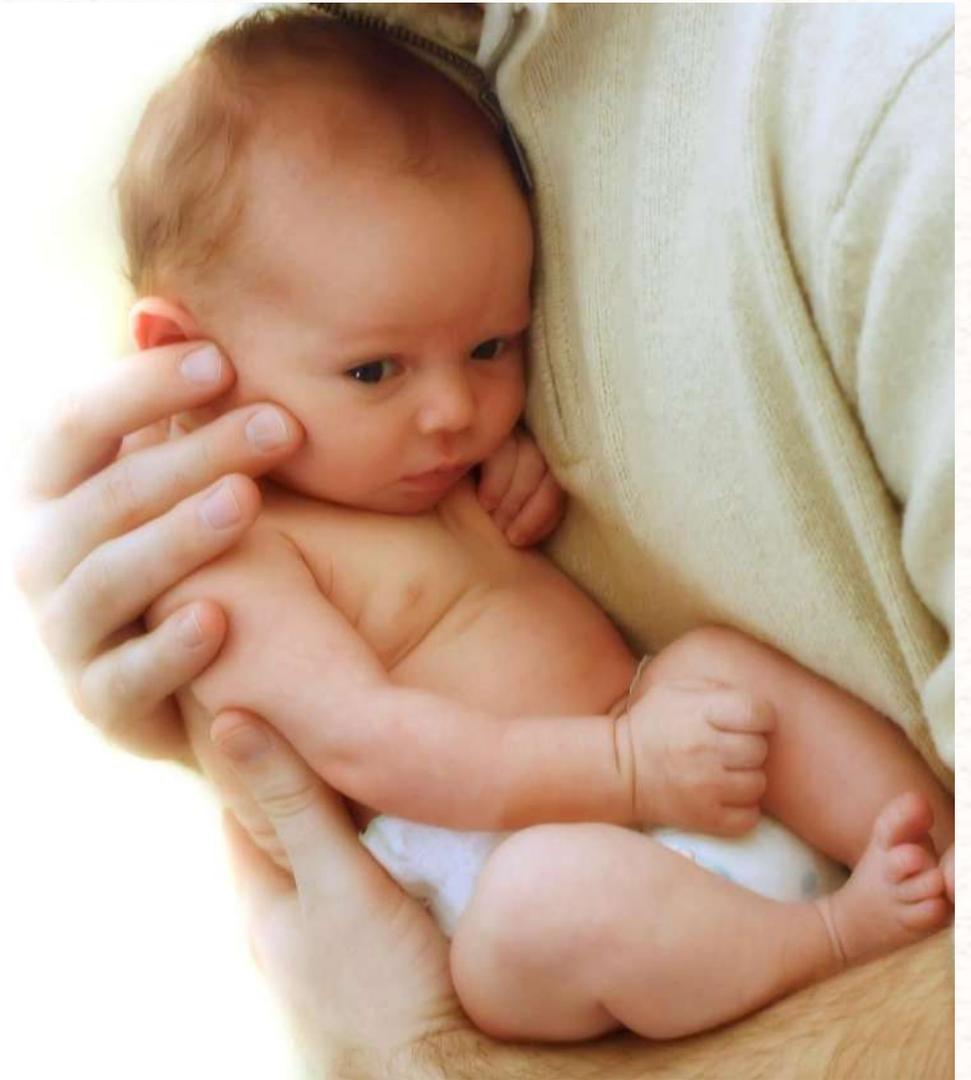
PHOTOGRAPHY BY
THE PALOMAS
STUDIO
CHICAGO

Catholic
Education...

as an educator



From teacher...
to parent



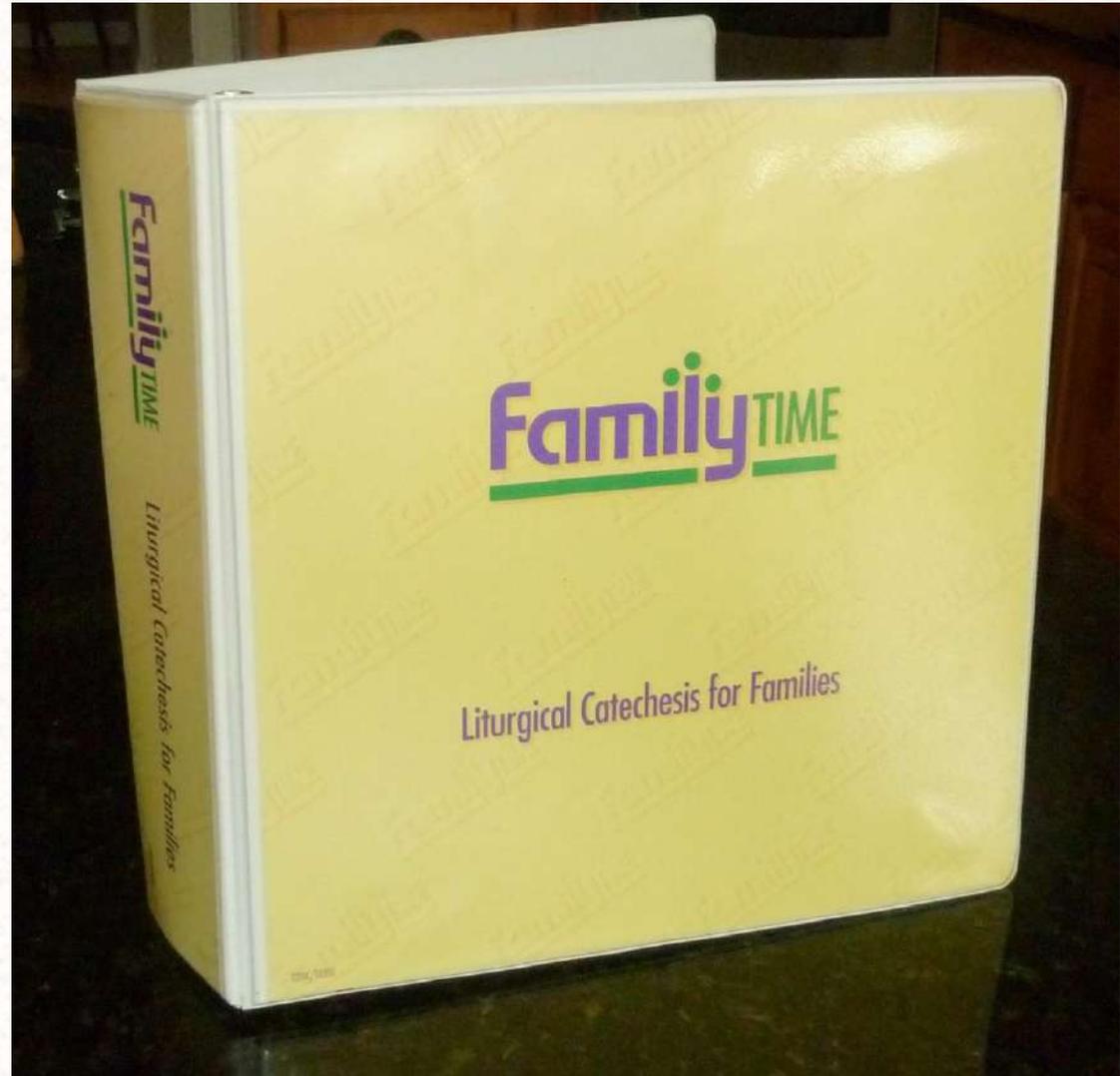
My BIG question:

How is
faith formed
separated from a
school model???



How I got here!

My introduction to
Family Catechesis



Families and Faith



Family Program

1995 – Present Families: 20-350

This program is for families with children in public school but is also open to families with children in Catholic schools. There are two day/time options for this program. At least one parent/adult attends with the children. There is childcare available and classes for children ages 3, 4 & 5, as well as grades 1 – 11. All younger children are encouraged to come with their family



From Generation to Generation:

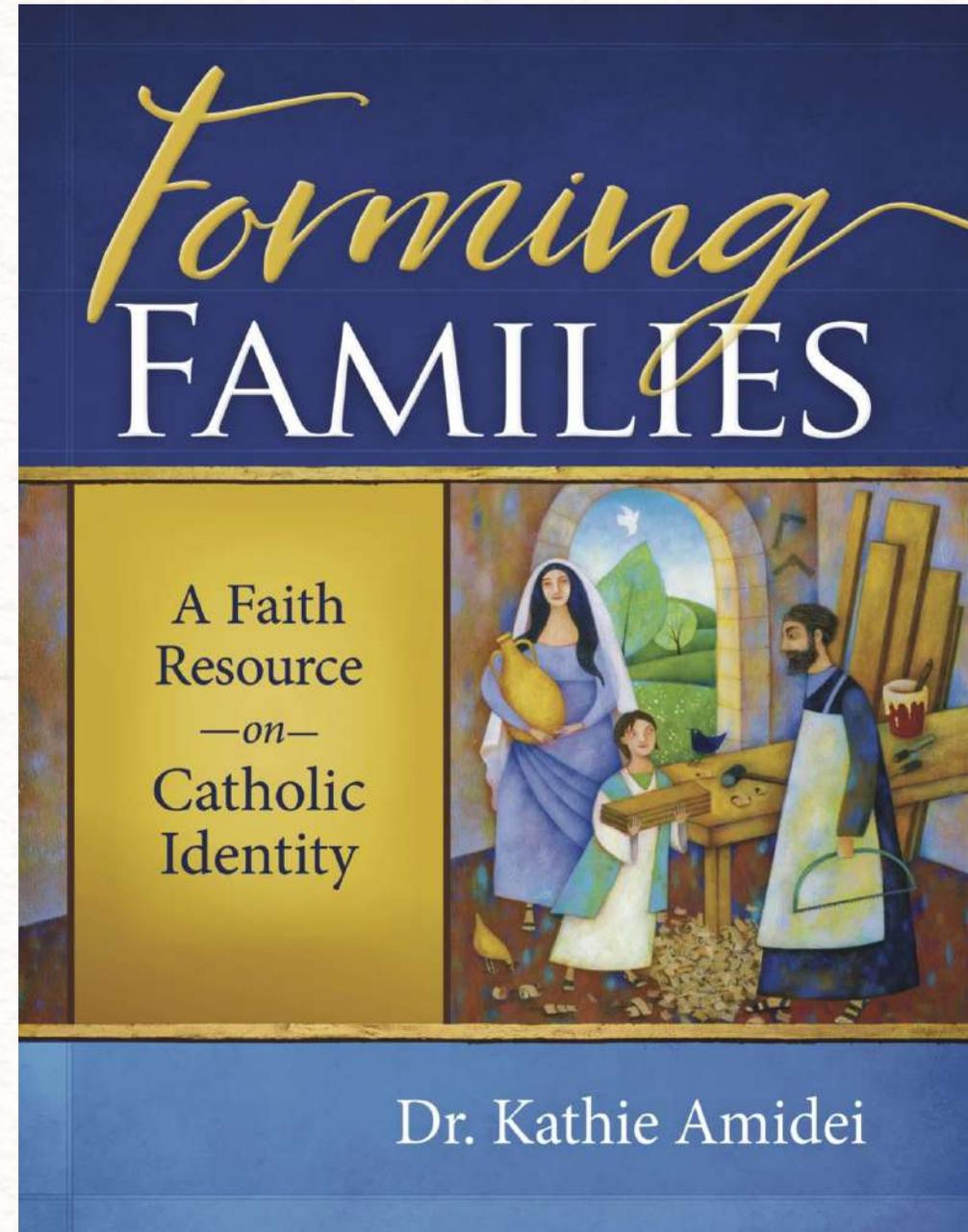
A Case Study on Factors in Family
and Faith Community Impacting
Faith Development

2012



COMPLETE FAMILY
SESSIONS
with prayer, learning
activities, and adult faith
sharing

Includes *A Getting Started*
section that walks you
through everything you
need to know, from
introducing your parish to
family formation to
sample schedules.



What are some words or phrases you would use to describe **families** in your faith community?



1.)

How Do We “Prepare the Soil to Plant the Seeds” of Family Catechesis?





Families are not a problem;
they are first and foremost and opportunity..

“Preparing the soil”

~What do to prepare people

~Introduce and continue to familiarize the concept

(Dan and Chip Heath, *Switch*)

3 keys to behavior change

Direct the rider

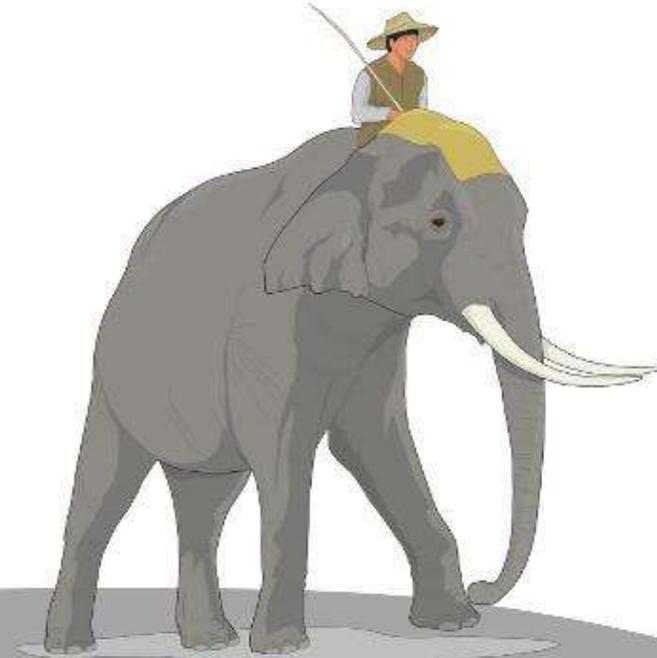
- give clear direction, reduce mental paralysis

Motivate the elephant

- find the emotional connection

Shape the path

- Reduce obstacles, tweak the environment, make the journey go downhill



“Preparing the Soil for Change”

- Remember the leadership, in your parish may not know what you know about the **research** on family faith formation
- They may not keep the clear **Church teachings** about parents as the primary catechists to their children- foremost in their minds
- Your parents may believe everything is as it should be... they get their children to your programs, and you will pass on the faith to them... after all you are the experts!
- Very few people like change anyway!
- Explaining this is not once and done- it needs to be repeated on a regular basis

“Planting the seeds”

~What to do to launch, relaunch or sustain a family program



Communicate

Communicate

Communicate

Meet with Leadership

- Meeting with the pastor as a first step/ invite him to witness it
- Invite your bishop to meet your families
- Consider getting on the agenda of your parish council, financial council, meet with the trustees and trusted leaders
- Have a formal presentation ready
- Be ready for questions
- Have a plan- communicate it
- Be ready to repeat every year until this isn't a new concept

Consider- Space/ Staff/ Budget



Advocacy: Taking it Step by Step

Principles of moving things forward



Seek Adjunct Help

Creative chunking staff responsibilities:

Gifted volunteers

HS Seniors

Seniors

Catechists

Parents

Grandparents



Parent Meeting

- Give rationale for the change
- Offer more than one option of presentation time
- Give them time to adjust. Give them space to digest this information
- This is when... **not to** give your opinion...
Let parents know this is based on Church Teaching and Research
- Answer the questions you are able to
(like time and place not if their teen will like it)
- Have your pastor at these meeting if at all possible
- The magic sentence...

WHY
Change ?



Why change? Why now? What to change?

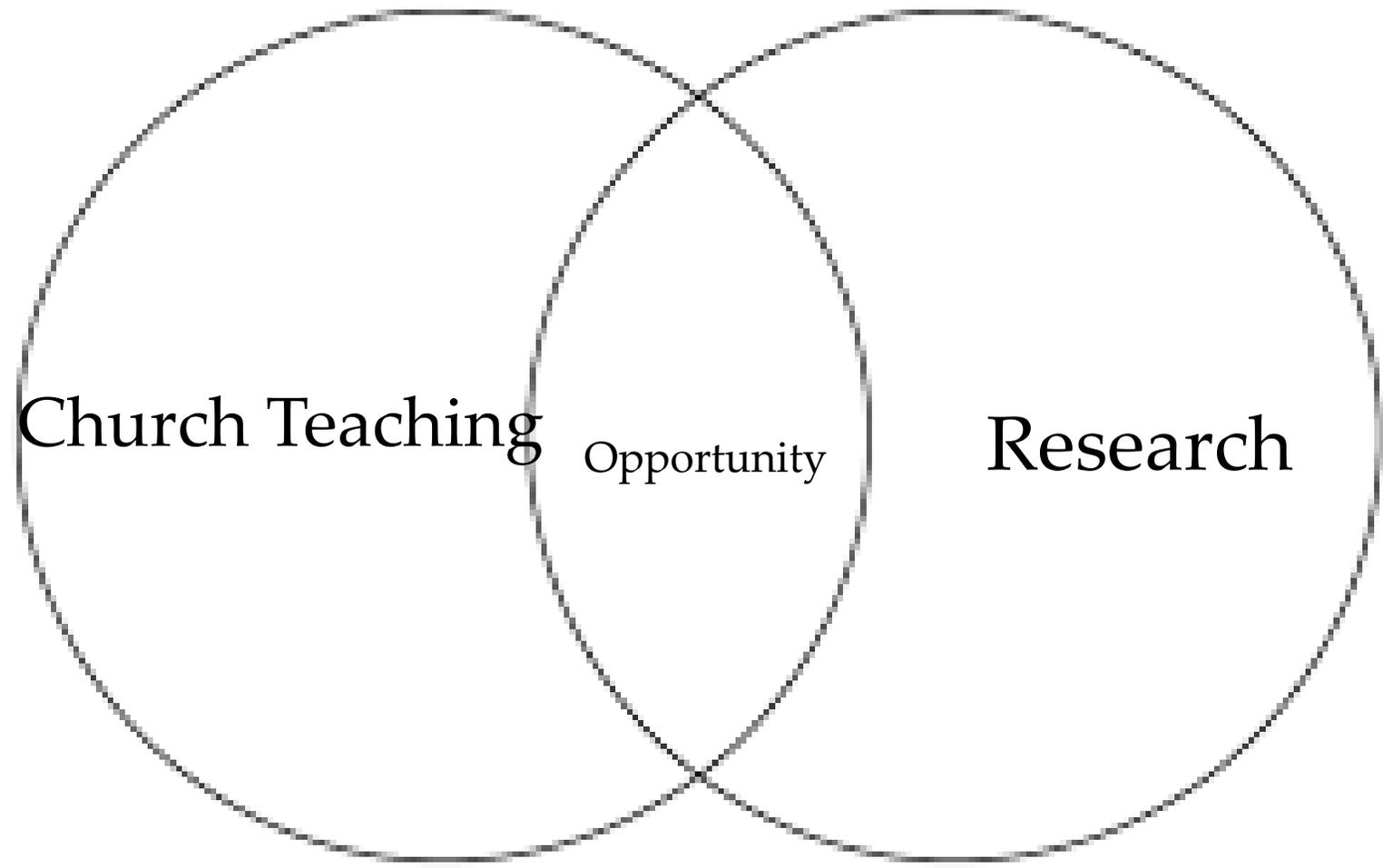
What the Church tells us about faith and families

What research tell us about faith and families

Why an Integrated Model of family catechesis

What are the valuable components integrated family catechesis

What works with families (What makes this model effective?)



Church Teaching

Opportunity

Research

Baptism Memories



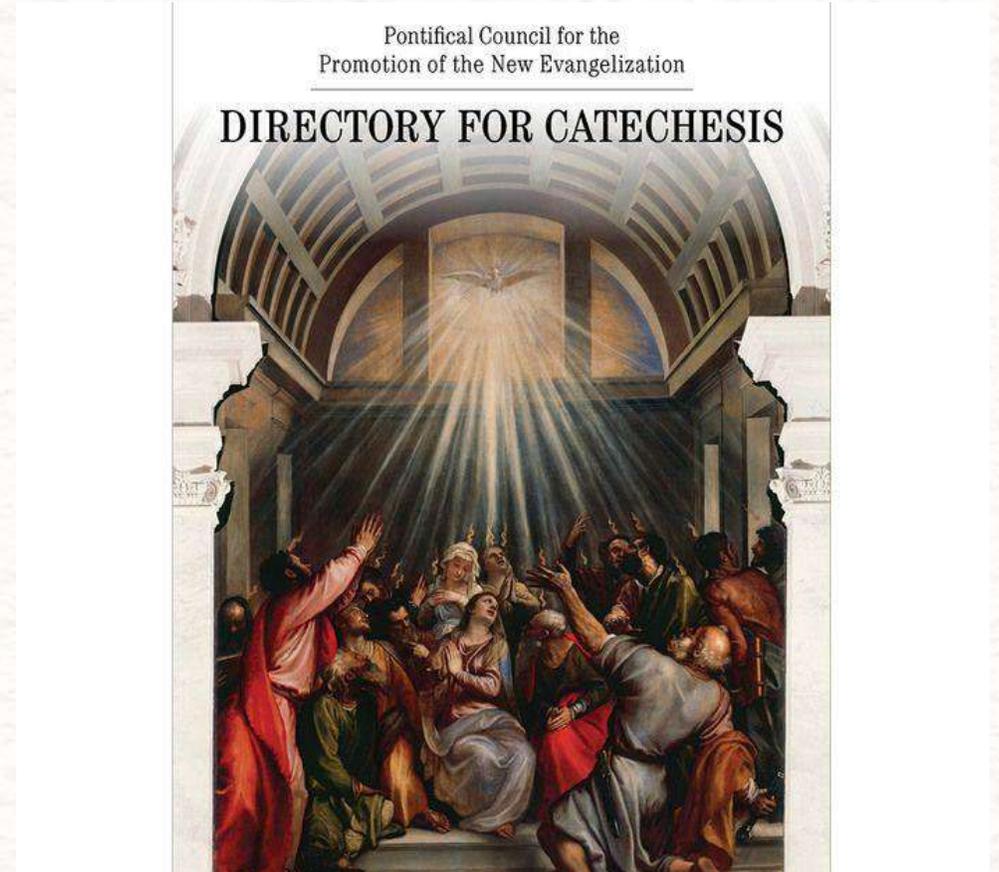
Parents and Families

Parents are
called to pass on
their beliefs,
faith, values and
traditions



The New Directory for Catechesis

- Believing in parents, with their daily example of life, have the most effective capacity to transmit the beauty of the Christian faith to their children. (#124)
- Faith begins at home, in the family.
- The family provides first context for faith that most children will have.



Parents



- Parents have the opportunity (not obligation) to be their child's first educators (and witness to) faith.
- The greatest challenge to parents engaging in this catechetical vocation is the temptation to delegate the responsibility to parish catechetical leaders and catechists.
- Parish catechesis is designed to support catechesis at home
- Without the latter, it is difficult for faith to take root and grow.



Nearly half of all young people raised in Christian families walk away from their faith when they graduate from high school. That's the bad news.

But here's the good news: **research shows that parents are one of the primary influences on their child's faith.**

What Creates Sticky Faith?



Research demonstrates that parents are the #1 influencers when it comes to spirituality in young people—yes, even teenagers. Leaders need to develop new ways to partner with parents, empowering them to nurture faith in their families.

Partnership with Families

Sticky Faith

(Kara Powell, Brad Griffin, Cheryl Crawford, Chap Clark)

Sticky faith depends on what parents express
and live out in their faith

Parents usually are the most important spiritual
influence on their children's lives

Most parents miss out on opportunities to talk about faith
with their kids





“The greatest gift you can give your children is to let them see you struggle and wrestle with how to live a lifetime of trust in God.”



Sticky
Faith

Behavior-based
To
Grace-Based

What Makes Faith Stick?

Teaching our kids that obedience is our response to trusting God (not like something we take off and put on)

Framing family discussions and activities as opportunities to know and trust Christ

Sticky Faith

Separating
to
Integrating



Sticky Faith

Drycleaner
To
Partner



Shift from Dry Cleaner Parenting to Ministry Partnership

Let families know we are on their team, not just replacing them.

They will often then take the time to engage their kid's faith more intentionally.

It doesn't work to outsource the spiritual growth of one's children.





Ministering to busy parents

What are some realities that challenge families and how is faith a gift to them?

How is catechesis relevant to the real circumstances and conditions of families?



Poster Activity

What do you think the families in your parish **want** from the church? FAMILIES WANT

What do you think the families in your parish **need** from the church? FAMILIES NEED

What do you think the families in your parish **are getting** from the church? FAMILIES ARE GETTING

What do you as a parish leader (or staff) need to be more effective in ministering to families? I NEED

2.)

What is Climate and
Why is it and a Sense of
Belonging Important?

Climate * Practices* Culture

Climate~

- The tenor of relationships, feelings, formal and informal: *How I feel*

Practices~

- Patterns of behavior, experiences and rituals cultivating Catholic identity: *What I do*

Culture ~

- Significant deep ethos of underlying identity, beliefs and values: *Who I am*

Creating Climate for Faith Formation!

Climate addresses the issues of emotional ease

Questions to ask about your environment:

- How do I feel when I am here?
- Do I have a positive or negative attitude when interacting here?
- Do I perceive this faith community as friendly, caring, safe?
- Do I feel welcome, accepted or judged and unsafe?



Attend to Climate Continually

- Call people by name
- Personal Interviews for Confirmation/ Baptism, etc.
- Email “We missed you” message & activity
- Social opportunities
- Service opportunities
- Celebrate Spiritual Milestones:
 - Cookies and Punch after First Reconciliation
 - Celebrate Baptism Anniversary

Warm Welcoming Environment

Creating Climate:

- Pay attention to your greetings and endings. Have a set warm greetings, a song, handshake, welcome by name, prayer, smile, greeters
- Offer hospitality. You are God's host and hostess.
- Tone is everything. What is the tone of communication, verbal, written, electronic?



3.)

How Do We
Partner with Parents?

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honor God, and make good use of freedom.
(CCC #2207)
- The Christian family... should be called a **domestic church**.
(CCC #2204, 2205)

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- Parents receive the responsibility and privilege of **evangelizing** their children.
- Parents should initiate their children at an early age into the mysteries of the faith of which they are the "**first heralds**" for their children. (CCC # 2225)

Parents are usually the most important spiritual influence on their children's lives

Most parents miss out on opportunities to talk about faith with their kids!

The best discussions about faith happen not just when parents ask questions but when parents share their own experiences, too!



The Importance of Parents

(Dr. Christian Smith)

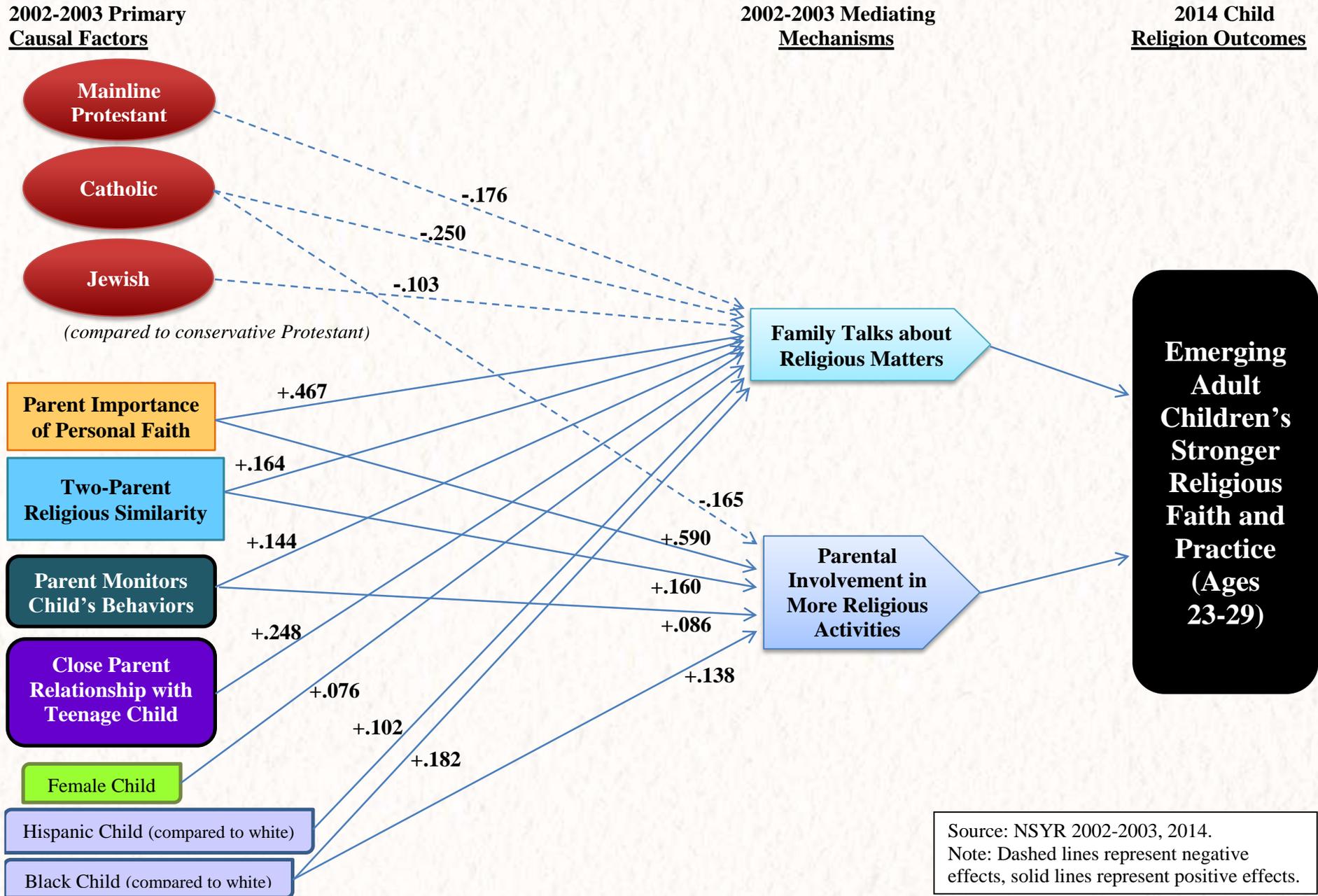
- Sociologists have conducted **decades of empirical research** on the “intergenerational transmission of religious faith and practice”
- Research **findings** are **consistent** and strong:
within a given religious tradition, the single most important influence on the religious “outcomes” of children is the **religious lives of their parents**
- The influences of **other factors pale** in comparison
including youth ministers, clergy, Sunday School, youth group, mission trips, religious schooling, peers, media, teachers, coaches, you name it
- Should not surprise us, but often does—because **erroneous cultural scripts** say: *parents matter less* for teenage children

The Importance of Parents

Conclusion: Parents, *for better or worse...*

- are the most influential “pastors” of their children
- define for their children the role religious faith and practice ought to play in life, which most children roughly adopt, if anything
- set a “glass ceiling” of religious commitment above which their children rarely rise

Figure 2: Causal Effects on Mediating-Mechanism Variables of Teenage-Years Parent, Religious Tradition, and Demographic Influences on Emerging Adult Religious Outcomes 12 Years Later (Standardized Ordered Logit Coefficients)



Both the Church and Research Tell Us Parents Matter!!!

We'll get what we are.

The best social predictor... of
what the religious and
spiritual lives on youth will
look like is:

What the spiritual and
religious lives of their parents
DO look like.

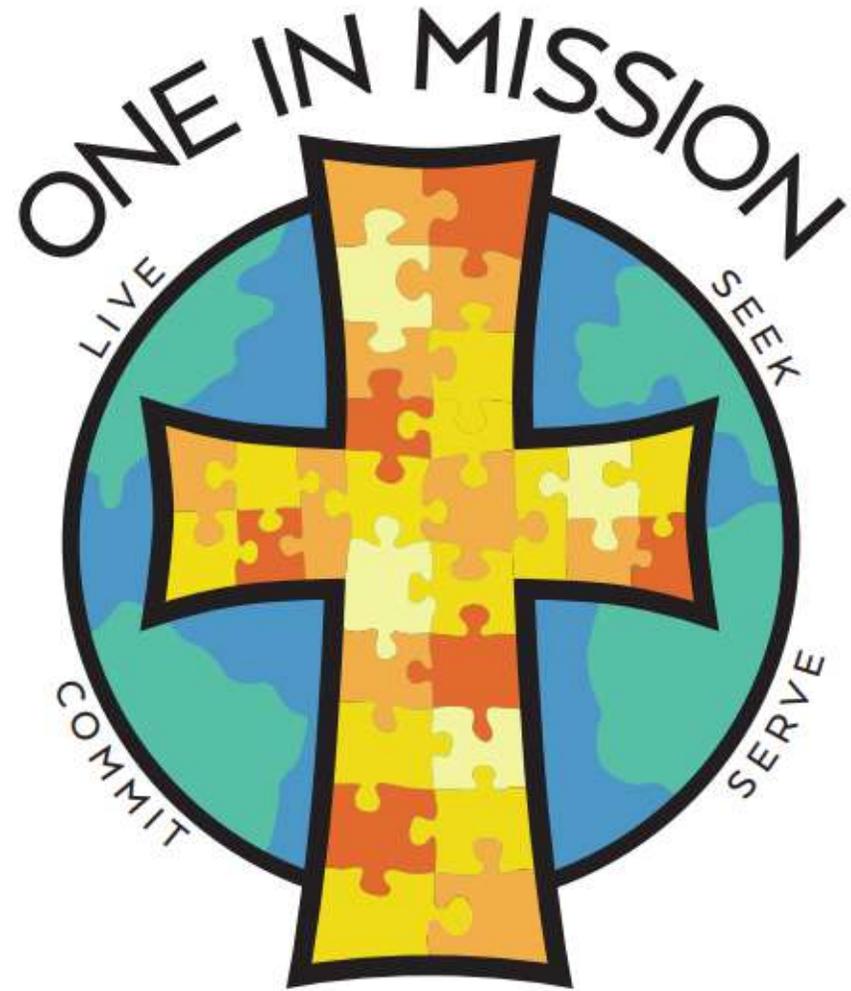
(NSYR- Soul Searching)





How does a Family Model help busy parents with their most important job they will ever have?

**What is one thing
that has been
essential to you
about your faith
that you would
like to pass on to
your child(ren)?**



Two Challenges of a Family Model

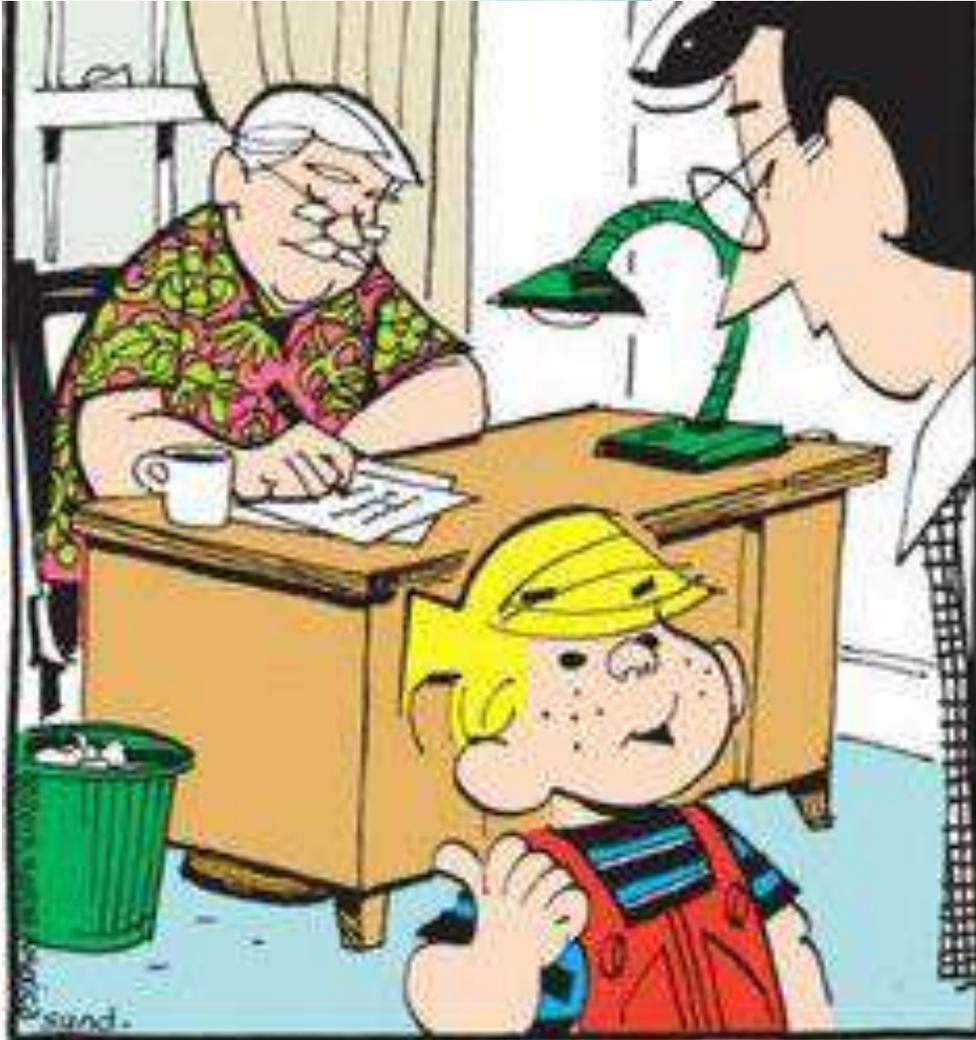
- Intergenerational Learning
- Age specific learning outside of your present role
Often that is adult –parent formation

4.)

Why is Intergenerational
Community Significant?



Why is
Intergenerational
Learning
Challenging?

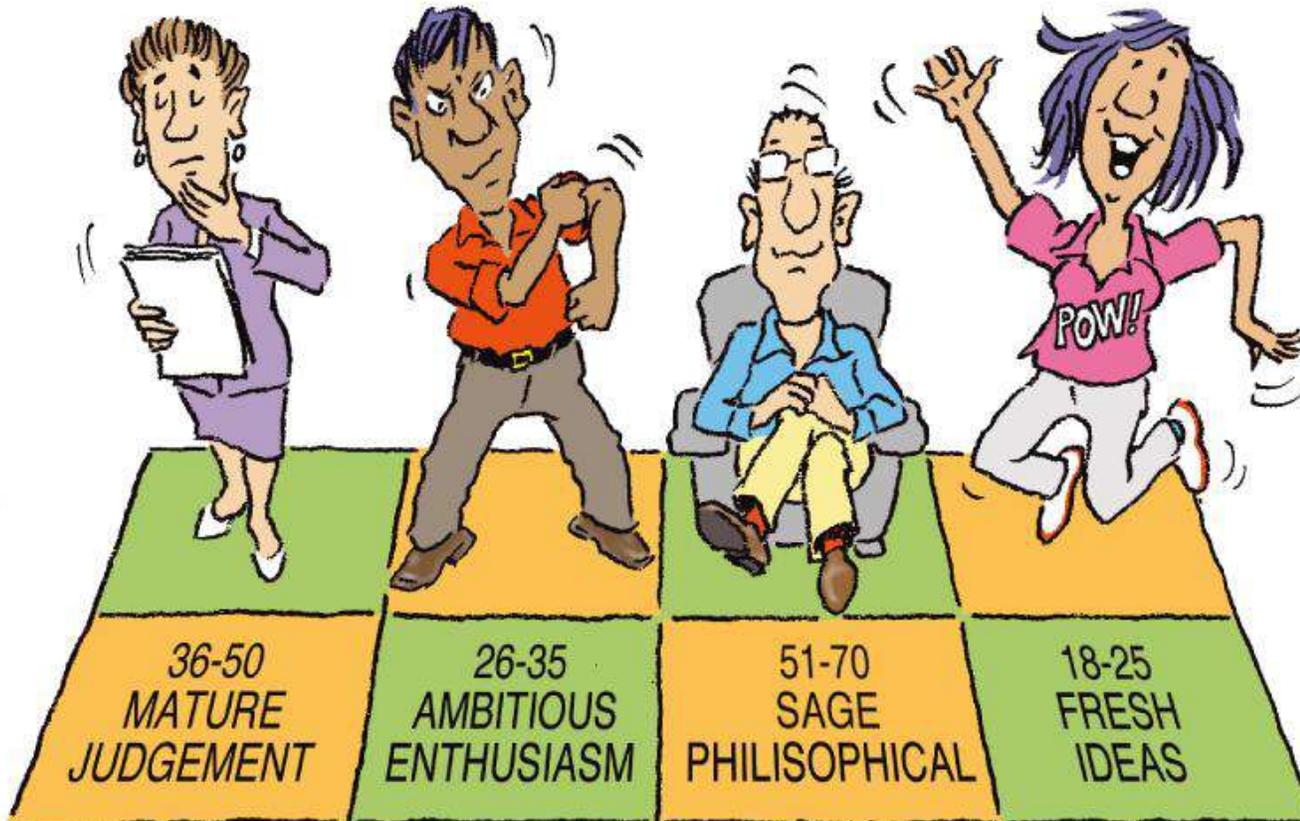


"CAN YOU BELIEVE IT? GRAMPA WRITES HIS EMAILS ON PAPER."

Cross Generational Communication

Value of Inter-Generational Communities

Generational Management



Mama, what's this?



Benefits

- **Supports families by surrounding them with a community of faith** and engaging the whole family in a variety of faith-forming experiences together; and by providing parents with opportunities to learn from Christians who are practicing their faith and raising faithful children.
- **Strengthens the ability** (confidence and competence) of **parents and grandparents to promote religious socialization at home**; be role models of faithful practice; and engage in faith practices at home and develop warm, affirming, and unconditionally supporting relationships between parents (and grandparents) and their children, teens, and young adults

Parents and Families aren't meant to go it alone

- Parents are called to community
- To be part of a community of faith and to raise children in families of love and shared beliefs



IG Faith Formation

What will make you successful ?

- Relevant Content
- Framing spiritual content relate to personal life
- Active learning
- Finding the sweet spot of -not too complex or too simple
- Creating a comfortable climate and setting
- Attention to the needs of different generations.



5.)

A Model of Family Catechesis



What are some factors that will make you more likely to successfully launch and to sustain a Family Model?”

Two Critical Factors!

Parents Session?



Family Activity?







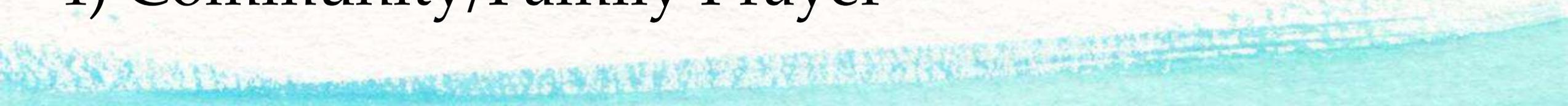


Family Catechetical Model



Comprehensive Family Faith Formation Model

Key Components

- 1) Social/Community Building Time
 - 2) Grade Level Classes including Adult Sessions
 - 3) Family Activity Session
 - 4) Community/Family Prayer
- 



Social/ Community Building
The Importance of Fellowship
Networking Families

Why Fellowship Matters?



Intergenerational Relationships

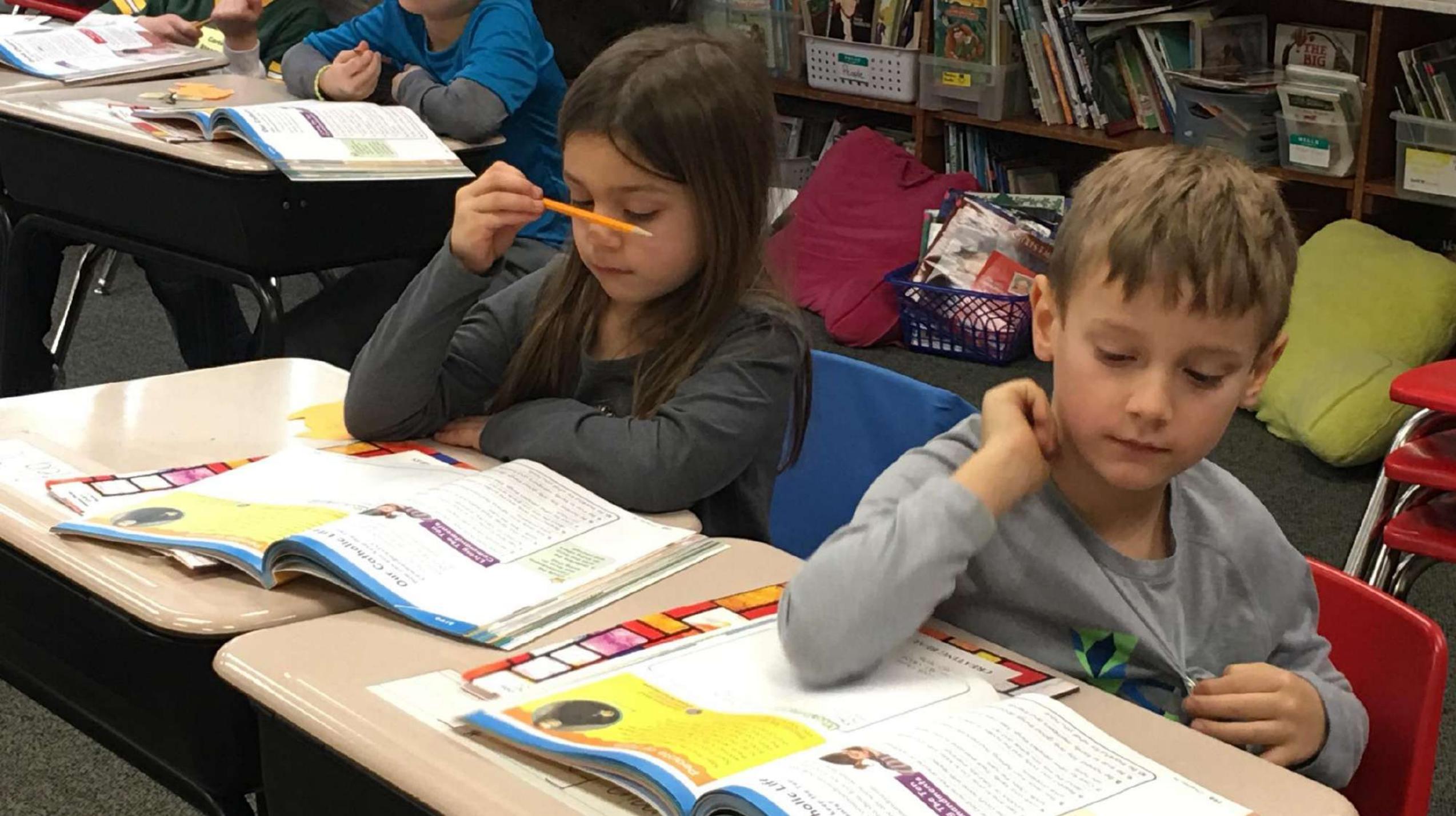
5:1 ratio

Kids need to develop a strong personal identity for faith to stick and community helps do just that!



Age-Specific Systematic Comprehensive Learning for Children and Youth







Kind words
are the
music
of the
world.

4th
GRADE
JOBS

HAPPY
BIRTHDAY

Mass Starters
October 4: Riley/Zophia
October 11: Bennett/Janagan
October 18: Sumai/Hadiya

Schedule

Monday, Oct. 14, 2017

7:45	Prayer
8:45	Reading
10:00	Math
11:00	Science
11:45	Art
12:30	Lunch
1:15	Music
2:00	PE
2:45	Homework

Morning
Prayer
Leaders
Mon: Ms. Huddle 145
Tue: Ms. Stroma
Wed: Ms. Brad
Thurs: Ms. Elton



Child on the left wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt with a constellation graphic.

Child in the middle-left with curly hair, wearing a blue denim shirt, looking towards the right.

Child in the middle-right wearing a blue and white plaid shirt, smiling at the camera.

Child on the right wearing a grey and white long-sleeved shirt with a green stripe, holding a green name tag.

Julian Miller

Color the Sunflowers
I AM SPECIAL

Color the Sunflowers
I AM SPECIAL
2024-2025





Age-Specific Learning for Children and Youth...
AND ADULTS... FORMATION

Why Parent Formation
is such an integral
to a Family Approach!





Parent Small Groups

Parent Café



Parent Café Topics

- Your Child's Self Esteem
 - Moral Confusion
 - Technology and Your Family
 - Bullying
 - Why is religion, spirituality and worship important?
 - How do you take on or respond to tough questions from your kids?
- 

Fish on Friday's



Enjoy a bite-sized nugget of information about our Catholic Faith! Each episode features an insight into who we are, what we do, and what we believe as Catholics. It's like a tasty fish stick of faith formation



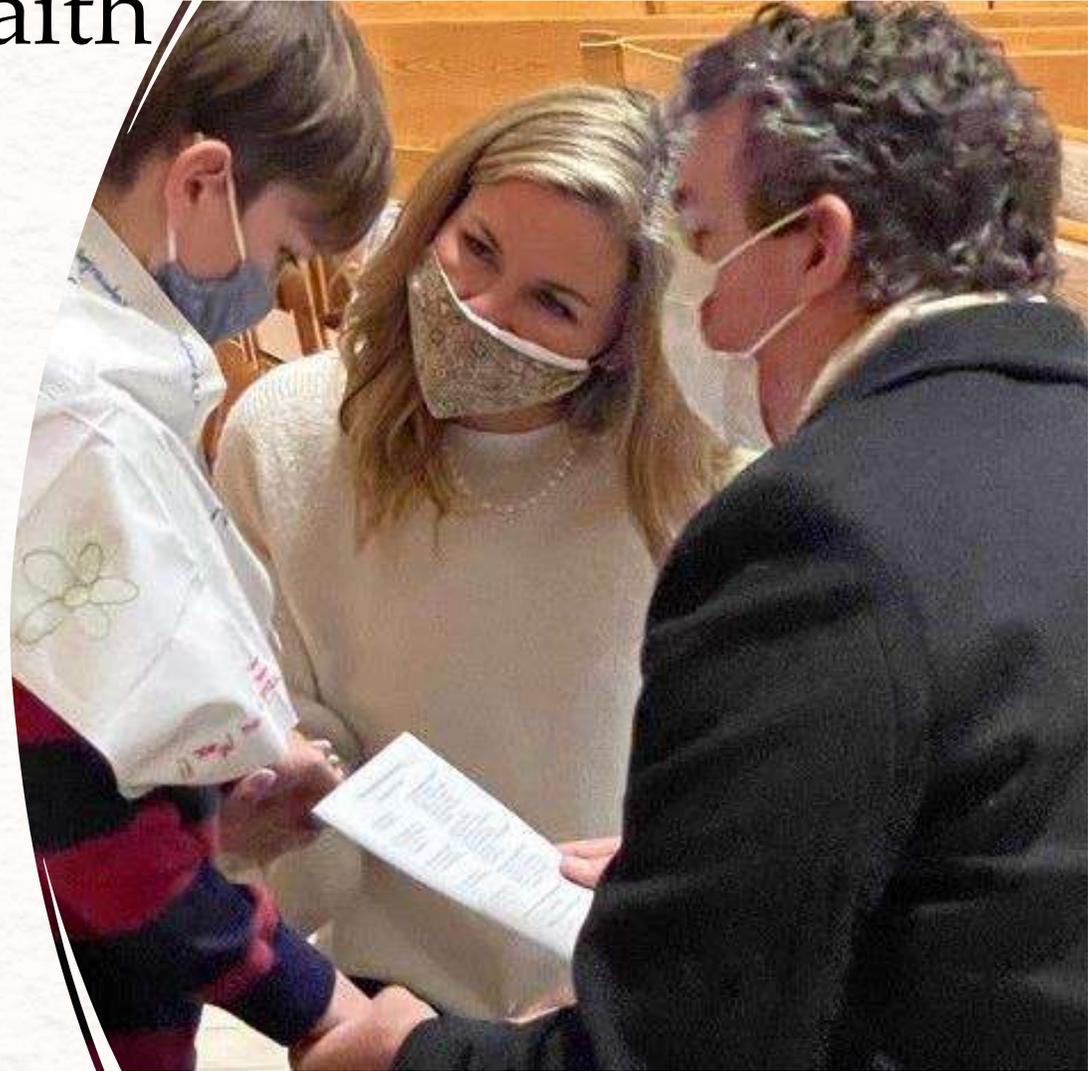
**FISH ON
FRIDAYS**

with Al McCauley

Families Talking about Faith

If there were only one practical take-away from our research, it would be this:

Parents need to not only “*walk the walk*” but also regularly *talk with their children about their walk, what it means and why they care.*



(*Handing Down the Faith, Smith & Adamczek p.225*)

Religion as a Second Language

- Knowing the language of religion and its related symbols is central to our spiritual experience and that requires learning this second language.
- Parents have the primary opportunity to do this. Everyday conversation provides the exact kind of sustained practice in learning the second language that will make religious and spiritual life make sense



The Secret Ingredient- Parents

What parents want/what parents need:

- Support
- Resources
- Information
- Inspiration
- Encouragement

What they don't need or respond to:

- Guilt
- Excessively high or low expectations of religious knowledge
- What they don't find relevant

The more **hooks** and **loops** that attach the stronger the bond

The Church has the
loops:

Ritual

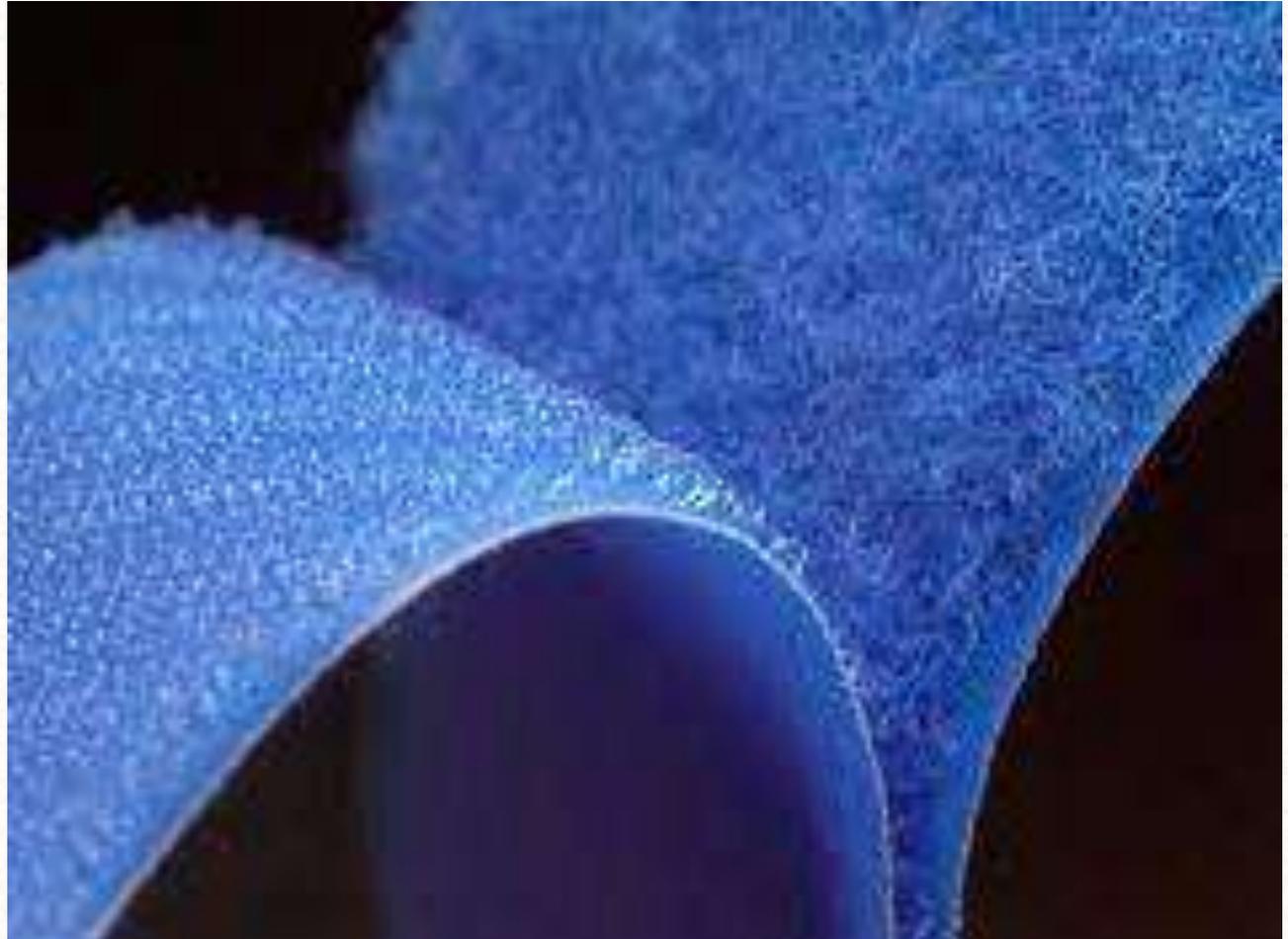
Prayer

Guides

Language

Experiences

You have the **hooks!**



Questions &
Discussion

