



FAMILIES FORMING DISCIPLES

A FAMILY-FOCUSED APPROACH TO FAITH FORMATION



YEAR FOUR

GOD'S SAVING LOVE FOR US: LITURGY AND THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS
WELCOME SESSION *JUST FOR PARENTS*

TOPICS

- Parents are the first teachers of the faith to their children.
- What is the Domestic Church?
- Introduce the Year 4 theme: **God's Saving Love for Us: Liturgy and the Seven Sacraments.**

MATERIALS

- Refreshments & snacks
- List of resources for parents

OPENING PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ,
We entrust our family to You and ask for Your blessing and protection. We love You Lord Jesus with all our hearts and we ask that You help our family become more like the Holy Family. Help us to be kind, loving, and patient with one another. Give us all the grace we need to become saints and Your faithful disciples.
Amen.



ICE BREAKER

Ask everyone to:

- Introduce themselves
- Share how many children they have and their ages/grade levels
- Share how long they have been participating in Families Forming Disciples (FFD)
- (Returning FFD families) Share what they like best about family faith formation, or how family faith formation has benefitted their family
- (New FFD families) Share their hopes for how FFD can benefit their family



TEACH

1. Hook/Question

Watch video: Archbishop Hartmayer's Welcome Video



2. Introduce Topic

GOD'S SAVING LOVE FOR US:
LITURGY AND THE SEVEN
SACRAMENTS.



3. CONTENT

It is very exciting to welcome you back to this important year of Families Forming Disciples, when we will deepen our relationship with God by learning about and experiencing God's love for us through the Liturgy or the Mass and the Seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church. Through the Liturgy and all the Sacraments Jesus pours out His great love, His grace, His very life upon us, and we, in turn, express our love for God! St. Thomas Aquinas taught, following the First Letter of St. John (4:8, 16), that it is not enough to say simply that God loves; rather, God Himself is love! Therefore, when we love the people in our family, God is living within us, within our homes. Every time we show one another kindness and affection, God is there in our midst! Since God is the source of all love, He is the One who actually makes our love for each other possible.

Ask: Your family is called to be the Domestic Church. What is the Domestic Church and why is it important? (<https://ourdomesticchurch.org/what-is-a-domestic-church>)

Explain: Yes, you are the Church! Here's a way to understand the family as the Domestic Church.

- Ultimately, the whole Catholic Church is the Family of God, founded by Jesus Christ, to unite families and homes in Him. The Church, as the Body of Christ, includes those who have gone before us in Christ as well as those of us living as disciples (baptized or catechumens).
- The Universal Church on earth is led by the pope and the bishops from around the world. (Remember that Catholic means universal.)
- The Local or Particular Church (Archdiocese or Diocese) is led by the local arch/bishop. (The Catholic Church is fully present in the Local Church through the bishop, ordained as a successor of the Apostles, and through communion with the Church of Rome and the pope.)
- The Parish Church is led by a pastor and it is where we receive the sacraments and grow as disciples in community with other families and homes.
- The Domestic Church, which is the Christian family or home, is typically led by parents or guardians. The family is the smallest body of gathered believers in Christ. Way back at the very beginning of the Church, the early Church Fathers called the family or home the "little church," because it is the first place where we learn how to be disciples of Jesus. It is in the home that we first learn to love, forgive, cherish and sacrifice for one another. So that means ... you are the Church, you are being and living as Church, in your family life, (and through your baptism and through regular connection to the sacramental life, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation).

However, it can be easier said than done to live as the Domestic Church. Your role as parents is so important and powerful, and the Lord's mercy and grace is abundant for us all. Research shows today that, unfortunately, fewer and fewer people believe that God even exists and therefore are unaware of and do not know His love for them. Human beings are made in the image and likeness of God. However, if a person does not know that he/she is a cherished child of God, they will find their identity in false, destructive, and harmful images.

This is why the spiritual development of a child is as important to the child's well-being as is his/her physical, emotional and intellectual development. For example, studies show that children whose parents intentionally nurture their spirituality are 80% more likely to be protected against substance dependence and abuse and 60% more likely to be protected against a major depressive disorder, and girls in particular are 70% more likely to be protected against sexual risk-taking behaviors. (*The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving*, Dr. Lisa Miller, Ph.D., Columbia University)

The data also shows that more than any other influence, it is parents, and not the Church, who are the key to spiritually healthy children, because **young people faithfully “mirror” the religious lives of their parents.** *The crucial location where youth's religious outcomes are largely decided is not the congregation or the parish, but the home.* (A Report on American Catholic Religious Parenting, Bartkus & Smith University of Notre Dame, 2017.)

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

(Break into groups of 4-6 parents)

What was your experience of faith growing up?

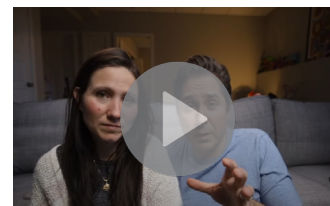
How did your parents' expression of their faith, or lack of expression of their faith impact your own faith for good or for bad?

Did your family practice any faith traditions?

Was God or faith the source of warmth in your home?

When your children are grown and they look back at their childhood, how would you hope they will answer these questions?

Watch: Catholic Parents Losing Influence with Children



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Thankfully, more and more resources are being developed to support parents in their role as the primary educator of their children. Studies have shown that children from families who have integrated *The Five Keys for Practicing Faith* into their life are more likely to grow in their faith and pass it on to their own children when they are adults. These practices are vital because they can make for happier, healthier and holier families.

Families Forming Disciples lessons intentionally implements these five keys in order to support families as they live out their call to be the Domestic Church.

Looking at the Five Keys, which are you already doing with your family and which would you like to do with your family?



Five Keys



Family Resources

4. CLOSING PRAYER

Ask for intentions and pray for the FFD families as they begin their year!

The Holy Family Prayer

JESUS, Son of God and Son of Mary, bless our family. Graciously inspire in us the unity, peace, and mutual love that You found in Your own family in the little town of Nazareth.

MARY, Mother of Jesus and Our Mother, nourish our family with your faith and your love. Keep us close to your Son, Jesus, in all our sorrows and joys.

JOSEPH, earthly father of Jesus, guardian and spouse of Mary, keep our family safe from harm. Help us in all times of discouragement or anxiety.

HOLY FAMILY OF NAZARETH, make our family one with you. Help us to be instruments of peace. Grant that love, strengthened by grace, may prove mightier than all the weaknesses and trials through which our families sometimes pass. May we always have God at the center of our hearts and homes until we are all one family, happy and at peace in our true home with you. Amen.

Adapted from [Missionaries of the Holy Family](#)

REMIND

Remind families about the next meeting date and time.

