



Frequently Asked Questions

As you read about our family based format, you may have some questions. We believe that the more you understand the program, the more you'll embrace it as an exciting opportunity for your family to grow in faith. So, allow us to answer some questions people have already asked and please feel free to call with any other concerns you may have.

Why have you adopted a family based program?

Over the years, parents have entrusted the Church to teach their children the Catholic faith. But, even the most accomplished Catechist cannot help children know and trust God with their lives; this requires daily experiences and faith dialogue. When parents take an active role in the faith formation of their children, parents and children alike can develop a richer relationship with God that strengthens them for the journey of life.

Many of our Catholic documents have emphasized this fact. Pope John Paul II's document "On the Family", the U.S. Catholic Bishops' letter to families "Follow the Way of Love", the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and the Rite of Baptism, to name a few sources, all encourage parents to take seriously their role in passing on the faith. But, many parents have shared with us that they are not sure what the Catholic Church teaches in some areas, which makes them uncomfortable about discussing faith issues with their children. This program will give you an opportunity to learn (or review) the faith as well as share the faith with your children.

Perhaps your family is already doing this. Then take this opportunity to come and share your joy and understanding with other families. Besides, it will be so much FUN, you won't want to miss out!

How do we know this approach is effective?

A few years ago, the Diocese of Joliet invited parishes to explore the benefits of intergenerational learning. Many parishes attended the seminars the diocese offered and are now implementing the concepts, in some form. Almost 500 parishes nationwide have accepted the challenge! Because research has proven that people learn best through experience, this hands-on approach will make a significant impact on religious education for the future.

Within 2 years after adopting this approach to religious education, Holy Trinity Parish received the Mustard Seed Award, given by the National Catholic Education Association to recognize parishes that have excelled in developing a program where parents play an integral part in their children's faith formation. To receive such a prestigious nationwide award is quite an affirmation that we are on the right track!

What books will our children use?

Each year, families receive a binder containing the coursework and follow-up material to be done at home each week until they return the following month. Each family also receives a Catechism of the Catholic Church and a Bible their first year in the program to assist them in their study.

The Doctrine and Truths of our Faith are covered through discussion, worksheets, games, music, and various hands-on activities. All material is based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Scripture, and Church documents.

Coming just once a month, will my child really be able to learn all of the doctrine?

Yes. If you set aside 30-60 minutes per week to review the doctrine which was covered in the group session, if daily you pray the prayers of our Catholic faith together, if you go to Mass each week and you regularly take your child to the sacrament of Reconciliation, their Catholic identity and spirituality will develop even better with this new format, because they will be experiencing their faith through you, their parents, on a daily basis.

Why are the 6th-8th Graders still going to meet with Catechists?

It's natural for this age group to gravitate to their peers. Jr. High students need the opportunity to learn and share with their peers what they know about their faith. This type of positive peer evangelizing gives the youth an opportunity to vocalize their faith which also helps them internalize it. They will also be learning at a deeper level than their younger siblings. When your family gathers to do the weekly homework, everyone can share their insights which can lead to profound formational conversations about the faith.

What could I hope to gain when I stay for the Parent Group while my 6th-8th grader is in class? I do not want to answer embarrassing questions or be put on the spot to demonstrate my knowledge of the faith.

We promise not to put anyone on the spot. Through a speaker or video presentation each month, you can expect to learn more about the Catholic faith and after the presentation, have your question answered, if you choose to ask them. You can also expect to hear what your teens are learning in class and be prepared to answer their questions. During this time, you'll find that you are not alone as you strive to keep alive your child's relationship with God and develop his/her ability to make good moral judgments.

You'll be offered opportunities to focus on your own spiritual journey, too. Through prayer and discussion, you may find God is present in new ways in your life. We hope you will have the opportunity to rekindle some old friendships or even make some new friends. This will be a very informal, coffee-and-dessert kind of session each month.

What if I have children in the 1st-5th Grade group and also in 6th-8th Grade group?

You should stay with your 1st-5th Graders, since you will need to work directly with them. When your youngest child enters the 6th-8th Grade level, you will have the opportunity to move to the adult group. If two parents are able to attend, one may work with the younger child while the other participates in the Parent Discussion Group, if you choose.

Won't the material be too complicated for my 1st Grader? And, what about the Kindergartners?

The "Saints in Training" program offers a viable alternative that combines Kindergartners and 1st graders in a classroom setting where the faith concepts are presented on a more basic level using music, drama, stories, and crafts. (After trying the 1st-5th grade class, occasionally parents feel their 2nd grader would do better in the "Saints in Training" program. If this is the case, they are free to transfer their child into this class during the school year.) If your *oldest child* is in the "S.I.T." group, you should plan to stay with your child in the classroom. If you have other children in the program, your child may attend this class alone while you participate with your older children. During a portion of the class, parents have the option of leaving their children and going to another room with a facilitator to discuss ways to communicate the faith at home to their little ones. If you feel your 1st grader is able to understand the material on a more advanced level, you are free to register him/her for the 1st-5th grade group. If you feel your Kindergartner is not ready for this class, you may enroll him/her in the Trinity Tots playgroup that will take place during class time.

We are not in the habit of attending Mass each week, and I have not been to Confession in years. Is it really necessary that we make this commitment in order to enroll in the program?

It may take some effort to develop the habit of attending Mass and Reconciliation, but it's well worth it.

The Mass is the epitome of our Catholic faith. We hear the Word of God and how it applies to our life; we learn of the great love of God that led to his supreme sacrifice on the cross that enables us to spend eternity with Him in heaven; we receive the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Eucharist; we offer praise to God as a community.

And the sacrament of Reconciliation gives us a unique opportunity to "begin anew" - to leave our sins behind and start over, with the forgiveness and grace to walk on in the footsteps of Jesus.

How can we resist these opportunities to be loved by God and show our love back? How can we raise children in the Catholic faith, if we disregard these two most important sacraments?

I am divorced and my children visit with their other parent on the weekends. I cannot ensure that they will attend Mass. Can I still enroll in the program?

We understand that there are certain circumstances that are beyond your control. Just try your best to encourage your children's other parent to take them to Mass, and when you have the children, be sure you make Mass a priority. You are most welcome to enroll.

Please feel free to call with any other questions or concerns.

HOLY TRINITY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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