



Explore Four Reflection Form

Life of the Parish Faith Formation

The Catholic Community of St. Jude

Life of The Parish Faith Formation

The Parish is the Curriculum!

Our holistic approach to our Parish Faith Formation came from an **intense study and reflection by our Faith Formation Board and Staff** of documents written by our U.S Catholic Bishops.

Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us (OHWB)

is a Pastoral Plan written by the bishops of the USCCB (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) in 1999. When we began reading this document, in 2009, it was just celebrating its tenth anniversary. We were surprised that it had taken us a decade to begin to unpack the wisdom presented in this pastoral plan.

Read excerpts from OHWB and our reflections on this document on pages 3-6.

This packet provides information about what ***Life of the Parish Faith Formation*** is, where it came from, what parish events allow the family to explore the Catechism of the Catholic Church in the community, and what the Church has to say about the family and faith formation today.



LIFE OF THE PARISH

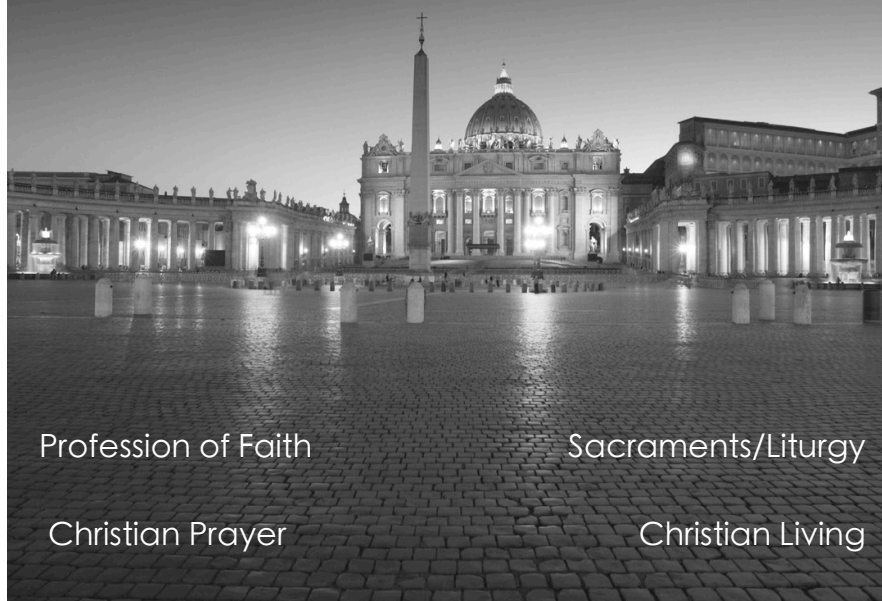
Faith Formation is the lifelong process of our communal journey of coming to God.

St. Jude Parish envisions this journey as a way to promote knowledge of our shared faith, nurture our intimate relationship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and fulfill our baptismal call as disciples of Jesus Christ.

We are each called by name, called to discipleship, called to live this Catholic faith. Unfortunately, according to

recent Pew Studies, **only 30 percent of Americans who were raised Catholic are still “practicing” - meaning they attend Mass at least once a month.** More than 30 percent no longer consider themselves Catholic at all, and **almost 40 percent claim Catholicism, but seldom or never attend Mass.** If we want to form intentional disciples, we must change the way we are forming our faith communities. The Church encourages us to work for the New Evangelization and it gives us pastoral plans to help us rebuild our communities into vibrant and engaging faith communities.

Exploring Four Pillars of Our Catholic Faith



POSTMODERN

In our post-modern world, our culture does not support our Catholic Christian values.

The recent studies have led Catholic educators and pastoral leaders to state that we have to create intergenerational faith communities who create an environment where the faith is proclaimed and lived every day.

Bishops' documents and letters state that it is in the family that children learn this practice. It is in the family where they learn faith, where they first learn of the love of God. Furthermore, **parental involvement in a child's faith formation increases not only a child's identification with their faith as they grow, but the commitment to and practice of that faith as they reach adulthood.**

In their book, *Soul Searching*, Dr. Christian Smith and Melissa Lundquist Denton report the results of the *National Study on Youth and Religion*. They attest that **parents matter most** when it comes to the religious formation of their children. After

reviewing the results of the National Study on Youth and Religion, Dr. Christian Smith says that, religiously speaking, "we get what we are."

The greatest resource we have in kids' lives, they say, is the greatest influence in their lives - their parents. Furthermore, they believe that our goal must be to come alongside of parents to help them pass on the faith to their children. **We should never underestimate the power of parents in the spiritual formation of their children.** Parents are too valuable to leave out of the equation. According to a 2007 survey by the Barna Group, parents must have an authentic and vibrant faith to provide meaningful spiritual guidance to their children.

This is what Life of the Parish Faith Formation is all about - partnering with parents so as to **provide a vibrant community where the family can engage in the practice of a living faith**, one where we provide spiritual guidance to each other, where we pray for and with one another.

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Four Parts of the Catechism

The Catechism of the Catholic Church is divided into four parts:

Profession of Faith

Sacraments & Liturgy

Christian Living

Christian Prayer

Catholics should be formed in all four of these areas, both in knowledge and in experience. St. Jude Faith Formation uses a comprehensive, systematic and intentional spiraling curriculum that is developmentally appropriate for all ages. Along with this textbook based catechesis we feel it is important to focus on the lived experience. Our parish offers numerous opportunities to learn and live this Catholic faith through the liturgies, devotions, and ministries of St. Jude. This component of our faith formation program is the Life of the Parish piece - Explore Four. On the next few pages we list examples of these events under the four categories of our faith, as designated by the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Participation in these events help us to learn and live our Catholic faith.

FROM OUR HEARTS WERE BURNING WITHIN US....

A Renewed Commitment to Adult Faith Formation

§ 4 § Such communities cannot exist without a strong, complete, and systematic catechesis for all its members. By "complete and systematic" we mean a catechesis that nurtures a profound, lifelong conversion of the whole person and sets forth a comprehensive, contemporary synthesis of the faith,¹ as presented in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. This catechesis will help adults to experience the transforming power of grace and to grasp the integrity and beauty of the truths of faith in their harmonious unity and interconnection—a true symphony of faith.

§ 5 § **Adult faith formation**, by which people consciously grow in the life of Christ through experience, reflection, prayer, and study, **must be "the central task in [this] catechetical enterprise," becoming "the axis around which revolves the catechesis of childhood and adolescence as well as that of old age."** This can be done specifically through developing in adults a better understanding of and participation in the full sacramental life of the Church.

§ 6 § To make this vision a reality, we, as the Catholic bishops of the United States, call the Church in our country to a renewed commitment to adult faith formation, **positioning it at the heart of our catechetical vision and practice.** We pledge

to support adult faith formation without weakening our commitment to our other essential educational ministries. This pastoral plan guides the implementation of this pledge and commitment.

§ 13 § Such lifelong formation is always needed and must be a priority in the Church's catechetical ministry; moreover, it must "be considered the chief form of catechesis. All the other forms, which are indeed always necessary, are in some way oriented to it."

§ 14 § We are well aware that placing ongoing adult faith formation at the forefront of our catechetical planning and activity will mean real change in emphasis and priorities. **In refocusing our catechetical priorities, we will all need to discover new ways of thinking and acting that will vigorously renew the faith and strengthen the missionary dynamism of the Church.** Although the task may seem daunting, we need look back no further than the implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults twenty years ago to find a model for success. Today, most parishes participate in the catechumenal process, which has brought the Church in the United States great benefit. We seek similar fruits from adult faith formation.

From our reflection: In this introduction the bishops offered a vision for reorienting the place of catechesis in the parish. It goes on to describe some of the issues our Church faces today, and calls all of us to "make disciples," to create a place where people can learn about and live a vibrant faith in a community that makes real the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We Believe - Creed

Many Faith Formation events are about "WHAT" we believe. Many ministries sponsor learning events and workshops on the beliefs of the Catholic Church. Some of these, **RCIA** and **Catholic Inquiry**, for example, are ALL about what we believe. Sacramental Preparation Sessions, including **First Reconciliation Prep**, **First Eucharist Prep**, **Confirmation Prep** and **Catholic Skills 101** are preparing us for sacraments, but they also teach what we believe. This category would also include DVD series like **The Catholicism Project** by Fr. Robert Barron and **Word on Fire. Bible Studies** teach us what we believe and show us where our foundational beliefs come from. The Parish Mission brings us together and renews our understanding of what we believe and our mission as parish. **Catechist preparation sessions** and ongoing formation also teach us not only about what we believe - but how to teach others what we believe and why. And for kids - **Vacation Bible School** is a wonderful way to learn about what we believe and why!

FROM OUR HEARTS WERE BURNING WITHIN US....

The Priority of Adult Faith Formation

§ 39 § We are convinced that the energy and resources we devote to adult faith formation will strengthen and invigorate all the charisms that adults receive and the activities they undertake, in the Church and in society, to serve the Gospel of Christ and the people of today. Every Church ministry will be energized through a dynamic ministry of adult catechesis.

§ 40 § **Adult faith formation also benefits children and youth. An adult community whose faith is well-formed and lively will more effectively pass that faith on to the next generation. Moreover, the witness of adults actively continuing their own formation shows children and youth that growth in faith is lifelong and does not end upon reaching adulthood.**

§ 41 § In addition, adult faith formation should serve as the point of reference for catechesis for other age groups. It ought to be "the organizing principle, which gives coherence to the various catechetical programs offered by a particular Church."¹⁵ Maturity of faith is the intent of all catechesis from the earliest years. Thus, all catechesis is geared to a lifelong deepening of faith in Christ. How necessary, then, that the catechetical ministry with adults set an example of the highest quality and vitality.

§ 42 § For such reasons as these, the Church wisely and repeatedly **insists that adult faith formation is "essential to who we are and what we do as Church" and must be "situated not at the periphery of the Church's educational mission but at its center."**

§ 43 § Yet despite the consistency and clarity of this message, **the Catholic community has not yet fully heard and embraced it. While most Catholic parishes place a high priority on the faith formation of children and youth, far fewer treat adult faith formation as a priority.** This choice is made in parish staffing decisions, job descriptions, budgets, and parishioner expectations.

§ 46 § Christian faith is lived in discipleship to Jesus Christ. As disciples, through the power of the Holy Spirit, our lives become increasingly centered on Jesus and the kingdom he proclaims. By opening ourselves to him we find community with all his faith-filled disciples and by their example come to know Jesus more intimately. By following the example of his self-giving love we learn to be Christian disciples in our own time, place, and circumstances.

§ 47 § God's call to conversion and discipleship unfolds in our lives with immeasurable potential for maturing and bearing fruit. The calls to holiness, to community, and to service of God and neighbor are "facets of Christian life that come to full expression only by means of development and growth toward Christian maturity."

We Worship - Sacrament & Liturgy

Faith Formation exists to teach us about and point us back to full and conscious participation in the liturgy. In his encyclical *On the Eucharist* - Pope John Paul II reminded us that *"The Eucharist is the source and summit of our Catholic faith."*

Our **Sacramental Preparation** sessions of course teach us about the liturgy and the sacraments. The **Confirmation Retreats**, gather us into a community of our peers as we prepare to journey together. The **Catholic Skills 101** Workshop on the Mass teaches us about the liturgy. The **Parish Advent and Lenten Reconciliation Services** also bring us into a community preparing for the seasonal celebrations together.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament gives us an opportunity to pray in the presence of our Lord, and participating in this community devotion at a **Weekly Holy Hour**, or in **First Friday** celebrations focuses on what we believe about the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and the importance of the Sacraments in our faith.

Holy Week offers a special opportunity to journey together with our faith family as we prepare for the culmination of our liturgical year.

FROM OUR HEARTS WERE BURNING WITHIN US....

Living Faith

§ 50 § Faith is both a gift of God and an authentically human response—a recognition of God's call in one's life and a free decision to follow this call by accepting and living the truth of the Gospel. As such, faith is living and active, sharing many of the qualities of living things: it grows and develops over time; it learns from experience; it adapts to changing conditions while maintaining its essential identity; **it goes through seasons**, some apparently dormant, others fruitful, though wherever faith is present the Holy Spirit is at work in the life of the disciple.

§ 51 § **Like all living things, a living faith needs nourishment**, which the mature adult disciple finds above all in union with Christ—"the way and the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6). "This life of intimate union with Christ in the Church is maintained by the spiritual

helps common to all the faithful, chiefly by active participation in the liturgy." It is also maintained by:

- frequent reading of the word of God, sacred writings of our tradition, and the official documents of the Church
- involvement in the community life and mission of the Church
- personal prayer

- participation in the works of justice and service to the poor
- the fulfillment of our human obligations in family and society through the active practice of love for God and neighbor

§ 52 § **A living faith is a searching faith—it "seeks understanding."** Adults need to question, probe, and critically reflect on the meaning of God's revelation in their unique lives in order to grow closer to God. A searching faith leads to deepening conversion. Along the way, it may even experience doubt. Yet the essence of this quality of adult faith is not doubt, but search—a trusting, hopeful, persistent "seeking" or "hunger" for a deeper appropriation of the Gospel and its power to guide, transform, and fulfill our lives.

Explicit Faith

§ 55 § Adult faith is clearly and explicitly rooted in a personal relationship with Jesus lived in the Christian community. "The Christian faith is, above all, conversion to Jesus Christ, full and sincere adherence to his person and the decision to walk in his footsteps." Our understanding of the person and the way of Jesus continues to grow by our meditation on the word of God, by prayer and sacrament, by our efforts to follow Jesus' example, and by the sure guidance of the Church's teaching.

From our reflection: This would require much effort, a great shift in focus, but that focus on the community made sense, especially in a place like St. Jude - where a community feel is actually palpable.

We Live Christian Living

Our Catholic faith is a lived faith. The Church teaches us about morality, and how to live in such a way as to make heaven our goal. So many parish events teach us about morality, and about how to live as disciples of Jesus.

Catholic Social Teachings are grounded in the belief that we are created in the image of God. We are called to respect life and human dignity, and to work for justice and solidarity. Many of our ministries in the parish focus on bringing about the Kingdom of God here on earth: **Respect Life Committee, Peace and Social Justice Ministry, Environmental Ministry, Caritas, Daybreak, Meal Angels**, our multi-ministry efforts in the **Local Service Opportunities** and **Sharefest**.

Catholic Heart Workcamps and Nazareth Farm Mission Trips, for junior high and high school students and adults, are a great way to combine learning about what we believe - with living out our call to discipleship.

FROM OUR HEARTS WERE BURNING WITHIN US....

§ 70 § **Promote and Support Active Membership in the Christian Community.** As adult believers, we learn and live our faith as active members of the Church. Our response to God's call to community "cannot remain abstract and unincarnated," but rather, "reveals itself concretely by a visible entry into a community of believers . . . a community which itself is a sign of transformation, a sign of newness of life: it is the Church, the visible sacrament of salvation." People find this community of faith in the parish and diocese, as well as in their families, small church communities, personal relationships, faith-based associations, and in the communion of saints of all times and places.

§ 71 § Accordingly, faith formation helps adults make "a conscious and firm decision to live the gift and choice of faith through membership in the Christian community," **accepting "coresponsibility for the community's mission and internal life."** Adults not only receive the ministries of the Christian community, **they also contribute to its life and mission through the generous stewardship of their gifts.**

§ 76 § **Orient adult Christian learning toward adult Christian living.** Effective adult faith formation efforts join faith and life. They help people in practical ways to live their daily lives by the light and power of the Gospel.

§ 83 § **Engage adults actively in the actual life and ministry of the Christian community.** "Adults do not grow in faith primarily by learning concepts, but by sharing the life of the Christian community." Not that concepts are irrelevant; they are foundational. But for most people the truths of faith really come alive and bear fruit when tested and put into practice—in soup kitchens, neighborhoods, small groups, workplaces, community organizations, and family homes. Adult catechesis practitioners need to learn to tap the learning potential of these diverse settings of Christian ministry and daily life.

§ 102 § **Family or Home-Centered Activities: There may be no place more significant for catechesis than the family. "Family catechesis precedes . . . accompanies and enriches all forms of catechesis"—and this applies in any structure or stage of family life.**

§ 103 § Catechetical opportunities situated in family settings foster both adult and family faith growth, while also addressing one of the major reasons adults give for not participating in adult education: time away from their families. Maximize opportunities for adult faith formation to fit into the rhythms of family life and not to pull families apart.

§ 117 § **The parish, then, (is the curriculum) provides the place, persons, and means to summon and sustain adults in lifelong conversion of heart, mind, and life. (The Parish) is, "without doubt, the most important locus in which the Christian community is formed and expressed.**

We PRAY Christian Prayer

It is through prayer that we grow in our relationship with God, opening to God, and allowing Him to work in our lives.

Both personal and communal prayer are important to our faith lives.

Our parish offers opportunities to grow in our understanding and practice of personal prayer: **Catholic Skills 101: Prayer, Prayer Workshops, Lectio Divina Prayer Groups, Gospel Reflection Groups, Workshops on Centering Prayer, Guided Meditation, Holy Hour - Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament**, numerous retreats for all age group, like **Discovery Retreat (high school), Confirmation Retreat (JHYM), Winter Retreat, Holy Thursday Retreat, Christ Renews His Parish Weekend**, and more.

Our parish also offers many opportunities to grow in communal prayer practice: **Rosary for Life, Benediction & Adoration in community, Stations of the Cross, Liturgy of the Hours, Veneration of the Cross, the Cross Walk, and Prayer Nights** of specific intentions.