



DIOCESE OF SIOUX CITY

Office Evangelization, Discipleship & Family Life

Sophia Institute Press – *A Family of Faith: Five Reasons We Recommend this Program*

1. **“Traditional” models of CCD and religious education are proving to be less effective than they once were.** Unintentional as it may be, it has helped to perpetuate a lack of parental involvement in the most critical area of handing on the faith to children. Many parents see it as the parish’s responsibility, and beyond what is “required” to receive the sacraments, there is little involvement, particularly beyond Confirmation. *A Family of Faith* attempts to tackle this situation head on:
 - a. “Since the current CCD and religious education model is struggling to transform family life, and since many young people who go through CCD 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 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.”¹
 - b. This is in keeping with one of Bishop Nickless’ primary goals: “We must strengthen catechesis on every level, beginning with and focusing on adults.”
 - c. The Church also places great emphasis on this: “Adult faith formation... must be “the central task in [this] catechetical enterprise,” becoming “the axis around which revolves the catechesis of childhood and adolescence as well as old age” (OHBWU 5).
 - d. “[In] order for the Good News of the Kingdom to penetrate all the various layers of the human family, it is crucial that every Christian play an active part in the coming of the Kingdom... All of this naturally requires adults to play a primary role... [A] fully Christian community can exist only when a systematic catechesis of all its members takes place and when an effective and well developed catechesis of adults is regarded as the central task in the catechetical enterprise” (ACCC 25).
2. **A much more organic and holistic approach to sacramental preparation:**
 - a. “*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. Because this program moves away from grade-based cohorts and focuses on transmitting the faith as a whole, **preparation to receive the Sacraments occurs as the child naturally matures and shows evidence of understanding. Each child’s readiness to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation should be assessed on an individual basis.** If a parish has a sacramental preparation program assessment, it may be offered in addition to the content presented

¹ <https://sophiainstituteforteachers.org/shop/family-of-faith>

in *A Family of Faith*.”²

3. **The program can be used to help foster a greater sense of community:**
 - a. “Adults do not grow in faith primarily by learning concepts, but by sharing the life of the Christian community, of which adults are members who both give and receive from the community” (ACCC 28).

4. **The program itself allows for a great deal of customization, adaptation and flexibility not only for the parents, but also for the parish. Formation that can be crafted more personally to each individual proves to be the most effective.**

5. **One of the primary goals of the program is reestablishing, empowering and equipping parents to fulfill their role as the primary educators of the faith:**
 - a. Adult faith formation has a tremendous effect on children and youth; in this way they will see that growth in the faith is lifelong and does not end with Confirmation (OHBWU 40).
 - b. Parents have the duty and responsibility to be the primary educators of their children; certainly, the home is even referred to as a “domestic church.” Effective adult faith formation will produce mature adults with a personal relationship with Christ, active in the parish, who possess evangelistic zeal. This will certainly have a profound impact on children, youth and young adults. In a sense, effective adult faith formation will produce children’s catechists and youth ministers in the home, that is, the parents will instruct their children in the faith by their words, deeds and particularly, example of lifelong formation – catechesis does not and should not end with Confirmation but is a pilgrimage over the course of each person’s life (OHBWU 39-40).
 - c. “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.”³ The Christian family is to be a school of faith, hope, and love – a miniature of the Church universal.
 - d. Mass attendance is strengthened as parents deepen their commitment to the Faith.
 - e. “Despite the Church’s constant emphasis on the primary importance of adult catechesis, we continue to focus, sometimes exclusively, on youth and adolescent education. It is the Church’s constant teaching that parents are the primary educators of their children, yet we continually fail to provide them with the requisite formation, knowledge, and skills. Instead, we attempt most, if not all, the teaching in schools and parish programs, and not that well! How can parents and parishioners live the Catholic Faith and impart it to others if they don’t know it themselves? I learned a long time ago in my seminary studies, “Nemo dat quod non habet” — no one can give what he does not have. Youth and young adult catechesis cannot be healthy unless we have rigorously well-formed adults who witness the Catholic Faith in their lives, in teaching their families, and in the Church and the public square.” – Bishop Nickless

² <https://sophiainstituteforteachers.org/shop/family-of-faith>

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