

God in the Family
Sacramental Preparation
2018-2019



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The Responsibility of Parents

“As it is the parents who have given life to their children, on them lies the gravest obligation of educating their family. They must therefore be recognized as being primarily and principally responsible for their education. The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute.

It is therefore the duty of parents to create a family atmosphere inspired by love and devotion to God and their fellow-men which will promote an integrated, personal and social education of their children. The family is therefore the principal school of the social virtues which are necessary to every society.

It is therefore above all in the Christian family, inspired by the grace and the responsibility of the Sacrament of Matrimony, that children should be taught to know and worship God and to love their neighbor, in accordance with the faith which they have received, in earliest infancy in the sacrament of Baptism. In it, also, they will have their first experience of a well-balanced human society and of the Church.

Finally, it is through the family that they are gradually initiated into association with their fellow-men in civil life and as members of the people of God. Parents should, therefore, appreciate how important a role the truly Christian family plays in the life and progress of the whole people of God.”

Declaration on Christian Education, #3
Vatican Council II

The Structure of the Program

In anticipation of the children's reception of the sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation, parents review the fundamentals of the Catholic faith in parent groups with a staff assistant present for at least part of the group gathering. The meetings take place once a week for five weeks. Participants are to prepare for each meeting by reading the assigned material and preparing the coordinating study questions. The meetings are limited to one and half hours: the first 45 minutes for discussion, the second 45 minutes for socializing. Parents can sign up for the evening that works for them, meetings are held on Sunday, Monday, and either Tuesday or Thursday evenings depending on days parents sign up for. The two textbooks for the God in the Family Program are Exploring the Catholic Church: An Introduction to Catholic Teachings & Practice, by Marcellino D'Ambrosio, Ph.D. and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Both will be made available at the introduction meeting.

The Vision of the Program

The values that parents live in their homes, whether social, political, economic, or religious, are the kind of values that are generally shared by their children. Because of this, recent efforts in religious education have come to recognize more clearly the part that parents and the family play in sharing the faith with their children. No longer is it simply a question of sending children off to school to receive religious formation. To hand on the faith, is, for parents, families, teachers, priests and religious, to share what we live and celebrate. Such is the vision of the God in the Family Program, to bring together formal religious instruction and the lived experience of the faith at home, particularly our belief in and celebration of Christ's presence in the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist.

Many other wonderful things are possible in the God in the Family Program. Husbands and wives deepen their relationship with each other. They have an opportunity to come to know other parents in our parish community and build new friendships. They will learn more about their faith by discussing with others what taking place in the Church is today. Finally, they recognize more deeply the love God our Father has given us in the loving embrace of Jesus Christ, His Son, through the ever abiding presence of the Holy Spirit.

WEEK I: "WHO NEEDS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?-CHAPTER 1 TOUCHING CHRIST THROUGH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

1. Holy Scripture Reading: Genesis 3:1-19
2. Take a moment to reflect on the scripture reading this week and share your thoughts. Conclude reflection with this Opening Prayer:

God our Father, open our eyes to see your hand at work in the splendor of creation, in the beauty of human life. Touched by your hand our world is holy. Help us to cherish the gifts that surround us, to share your blessings with our brothers and sisters, and to experience the joy of life in your presence. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

3. Organizational Details:
 - a. Welcome. Introduce facilitator and Host/hostess for the evening
 - b. Make introductions
 - c. Invite them to think about hosting in their home and/or helping with providing the snack & beverage.
4. Questions based on Chapter 1 of *Exploring the Catholic Church*:
 - a. How is Jesus Christ important to me? To my family? How can I put Jesus in the "driver's seat of my life" (cf. p. 10)? Give an example of how Jesus Christ has affected your life?
 - b. What are the effects of sin? How does Jesus save us from sin and death?
 - c. What three images does the author use to describe the Church? Choose one of these and discuss how it has an impact on your life.

- d. What is the Catholic Church’s “constitution?” What (or who) helps us authentically interpret this “constitution?”

5. Questions based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) (Paragraphs 396-401, 407-409):

- a. At what point did Original Sin occur and how does that reflect a change in our relationship with our concept of God?
- b. What consequences has sin brought into our lives and the lives of all people?
- c. In spite of sin, is man still essentially free? If so, why is life experienced as a “battle” or “struggle”?

6. Reflection this week:

Have there been times in my life I’ve deliberately kept Jesus Christ at a distance? Why?

CLOSING PRAYER

Schedule future meeting date with time and place

Week II: “Baptism: Gateway to Life” and “Confirmation: Empowered to Serve”-Chapters 2 and 3

1. Scripture Reading: Matthew 28:19-20 and John 3:1-5
2. Take a moment to reflect on the scripture reading this week and share your thoughts. Conclude reflection with this Opening Prayer:

God, Our Father, from living stones, your chosen people built an eternal temple to your glory. Increase the spiritual gifts you have given to your Church that your faithful people may continue to grow into the new and eternal Jerusalem. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

3. Questions based on Chapters 2-3 of *Exploring the Catholic Church*:
 - a. T/F: Catholics earn salvation by doing good works (cf. CCC 1996). Extra credit: Why are infants baptized in the Catholic Church?
 - b. Why did God choose water to be the sign of baptism? Why do? Catholics cross themselves with holy water as they enter church?
 - c. Discuss your experience of baptisms you've attended. Are you a godparent? How does one continue their relationship with the godchild in prayer and deed for years following baptism?
 - d. How are Catholics “born again?” Is conversion to Christ a “one-time” affair or a process? (cf. St. Peter in John 18:15-18: 25-27 and 21:15-19). What happened in St. Peter’s life and in Marcellino D’Ambrosio’s life after they surrendered themselves to Jesus Christ?

- e. What does the author mean when he mentions the importance of “a new, personal Pentecost?” (p. 40).
- f. What does Sacred Scripture say happens to a Christian after baptism through the laying on of hands of an apostle?
- g. What does it mean for a confirmed Christian to be a priest, prophet and king? How can you practically exercise these roles in your life?
- h. What are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit? How have they helped me?

4. Questions based on the CCC (797-801):

- a. The Holy Spirit has been entrusted to the Church. What does this mean about the Church?
- b. What are the gifts the Holy Spirit has given me and how have I shared them with the church? All our gifts, great or humble, are meant for?

WEEK III: “PERSONAL PRAYER: PATHWAY TO JOY”-CHAPTER 4 and “MARY AND THE SAINTS”-CHAPTER 8

1. Scripture Reading: Luke 11: 1-4; 9-13

2. Take a moment to reflect on the scripture reading this week and share your thoughts. Conclude reflection with this Opening Prayer:

Eternal Father, let the gift of your life continue to grow in us, drawing us out of darkness into your marvelous light. Make us alive in Christ Jesus and keep us watchful in prayer and true to his teaching until your glory is revealed in us. We ask this through the intercession of Mary our blessed Mother. Amen.

3. Questions based on Chapter 4 and Chapter 8 of *Exploring the Catholic Church*

- a. Name a couple of ways of prayer mentioned by the Author.
- b. What are the “steps” involved in prayer?
- c. What is the original meaning of the English word “pray”? (Chapter 8)
- d. What do the initials A-C-T-S stand for? Describe what each of these letters means for your prayer life.
- e. Where and when do you like to do personal prayer? How do you pray as a couple? How do you pray as a family?
- f. Mary is the Mother of God and our mother. How do we as Catholics honor our spiritual mother?

- g. What is the significance of the queen mother in the Old Testament?
- h. How can “Christ be the one mediator between God and men” and yet the saints also be mediators? What is the communion of saints?

4. Questions based on the CCC (2566-67), 490-93, 954-959 and 964-966):

- a. In prayer, God’s initiative of love always comes first; our own first step is always a response. When we pray, we are responding to God’s thirst for us and our thirst for Him. How do I respond to God’s initiative?
- b. Is it possible to have a personal relationship with God without the dialogue of prayer? Why?
- d. The Church has three states: The Church Triumphant, the Church Militant, and the Church Suffering. These describe the Church in Heaven, on earth and in purgatory, respectively. Are these three united and how do we experience this union in everyday life?
- e. The fact that God chose to work through Mary, suggests what about His view of us? Why do you think God preserved Mary from the effects of original sin?

5. Preview handout entitled “Morality, Sin and Confession” and “Guide to Confession” for the next week.

Reflection this week:

What can I do to change my busy life so that I can have time for personal prayer? Do I reflect Mary’s complete trust in God? If not, how can I change?

**WEEK IV: “KEEPING A PURE HEART”-CHAPTER 7
SIN, THE NEED FOR CONVERSION AND
THE GRACE OF THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

1. Scripture Reading: 2 Samuel 11:2-12:14, 1 John 5:15-17 and Luke 23:39-43

2. Take a moment to reflect on the scripture reading this week and share your thoughts. Conclude reflection with this Opening Prayer:

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in your unbounded mercy you have revealed the beauty of your power through your constant forgiveness of our sins. May the power of this love be in our hearts to bring your pardon and your kingdom to all we meet. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

3. Questions based on Chapter 7 of *Exploring the Catholic Church*:

- a. Do I feel the need to seek mercy from God in my life?
- b. What are some of the reasons people do not approach this wonderful sacrament of God’s mercy?
- c. Explain the terms “world” and “flesh” and “devil”.
- d. What is meant by a sin of omission?
- e. Name the three classic aids to repentance. How can you live out each of these aids in your life?
- f. What is “general absolution” and why does the Church only allow it in emergency situations (e.g. plane going down, troops marching off to war, etc.)? (CCC 1483)

- g. T/F All Fridays, throughout the year, are days of penance.

4. Questions based on the CCC (1849-69):

- a. What is sin and where does it most clearly manifest its disorder?

- b. Is it possible to commit sin in some way that one is truly acting out of love? How is sin always an obstacle to love?

- c. What is mortal sin? What is a venial sin? What three conditions are required for mortal sin to occur? What is it that makes a mortal sin deadly?

- d. "Sin leads to a proclivity to sin..." What does this mean and what implications does it have for marriage and family life?

Reflection this week:

Do we have a total gift of self in our marriage? Do our bodies express the totality of self-gift and unity of Christ and his Church in our marriage? Am I ready to seek God's mercy for times I've failed to live the totality of gift of self to God and my spouse? Building on trust in God's merciful love, am I ready to completely trust my life, marriage and family to God's beautiful plan for us? (Call to mind any examples of God's forgiveness you've encountered.)

5. Presentation by staff member on the Sacrament of Reconciliation

WEEK V-“WHAT IS THE MASS?”
AND “GETTING MORE OUT OF THE MASS?-CHAPTERS 5 AND 6

1. Scripture Reading: John 6:34-35; 52-58
2. Take a moment to reflect on the scripture reading this week and share your thoughts. Conclude reflection with this Opening Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, we worship you living among us in the Sacrament of your Body and Blood. May we offer to our Father in heaven a solemn pledge of undivided love. May we offer to our brothers and sisters a life poured out in loving service of that kingdom where you live with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen

3. Questions based on Chapters 5-6 of *Exploring the Catholic Church*:
 - a. What are the two main parts of the Mass?
 - b. What are the three principal aspect of the Mass? Explain the significance of each of these aspects in your own spiritual life (e.g.: the fact that I can offer my sufferings up with Christ as he offers himself to God the Father at Mass gives me peace.”)
 - c. T/F: Mass attendance is required each Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation?
 - d. Who becomes present at Mass? What are the four presences of Christ in the Mass? Which of these is the most intense and intimate presence?
 - e. What is transubstantiation? (Hint: after the consecration, the substance of the bread and wine is changed into the substance of the Body and Blood of Christ, but the “accidents” or “surface characteristics” of taste, touch and smell of bread and wine remain.)

- f. T/F The bread and wine don't become the real Body and Blood of Christ at Mass; they only symbolize Him.
- g. The giving of _____ symbolizes the giving of ourselves at Mass.
- h. What is the significance of the **signs** of bread and wine in the Eucharist? Of all the signs that God could have chosen, why did he use the sign of bread and wine?
- i. T/F: If you've committed mortal sin it is OK to receive Holy Communion without first going to Confession.
- j. How can I prepare for Mass as an individual? As a couple? As a family? How can I "break the hard-baked clay that is my heart to let Christ soak in and soften my heart"?
- k. Why does the author think it's not such a good idea to "run a marathon after eating a rich meal?" How can we as a family rest, serve and recreate on Sunday?
- l. If you have experienced prayer in Eucharistic Adoration, consider sharing your experience. How is Adoration the "digestion" of what happens at Mass? How does adoration help you appreciate Mass and prepare for Mass?

4. Review the “Guidelines for the Reception of Communion” by the U.S. Bishops. (Handout provided to facilitator) Are these guidelines, in your experience, generally observed?

5. Questions based on the CCC (1324, 1326, 1333-37, 1344):

- a. How important is the Eucharist in Catholic life?
- b. How is the Eucharist prefigured in the Manna, in the multiplication of loaves and fishes, and in the conversion of water to wine at Cana?
- c. The Judeo-Christian heritage holds that we live in an eternal present. What does this mean in light of the memorial celebration of the Eucharist?
- d. What does the phrase “until he comes” mean in light of the Eucharist?

Reflection for this week:

No one is worthy to receive the body and blood of Christ. In spite of this, how can I work to make myself a more fitting recipient of Christ my Savior?

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

CALENDAR

Week	Circle Your Dates:	<i>“Exploring the Catholic Church”, and “The Catechism of the Catholic Church”</i>	Meeting Date, Time, and Location
1	<u>October 7th</u> <u>October 8th</u>	Chapter 1 CCC 396-401 407-409	
2	<u>October 14th</u> <u>October 15th</u>	Chapters 2 and 3 CCC 797-801	
3	<u>October 21st</u> <u>October 22nd</u>	Chapters 4 and 8 CCC 2566-67 CCC 954-959; 964	
4	<u>October 28th</u> <u>October 29th</u>	Chapters 7 CCC 1849-69	
5	<u>November 4th</u> <u>November 5th</u>	Chapters 5 and 6 CCC 1324, 1326, 1333-37, 1344	