

WHY A NEW PROGRAM FORMAT?

Recent studies on religion point to the importance of parents in the spiritual formation of their children. Parental involvement in a child's faith formation increases not only a child's identification with their faith as they grow, but their commitment to the faith, and their practice of that faith as they reach adulthood. The Church has always recognized and acknowledged the role of parents as the primary formers of faith in their children, but sometimes the Church does not enable or equip parents for their role as effectively as it could. A format grounded in Family Faith Formation supports the domestic Church by coming alongside families and journeying with them.

Lessons focus on *a lived faith*, on expressions of faith that affirm the Church teachings in everyday life, while helping parents to more intentionally teach the faith by identifying the faith lessons in the everyday moments when we teach our children to love, to respect, to forgive, to care for creation, and to care for each other. Working together, we will assist parents in building upon what they are already doing and help them to expand their knowledge and practice of their faith as a family.

FORMAT

FORMATION COMPONENT

Family Sessions

A monthly family session will be held on the 2nd Sunday of the Month immediately following the 10 AM Mass. Session would begin once families arrive in the school hall. Family Gathering/Class would be 1 hour and 15 minutes. Dismissal should be between 12:15 & 12:30 PM depending on start time.

- Families gather in a large group setting for snack and refreshments following Mass.
- After a brief prayer, the children report to classrooms with catechists. Parents remain in the hall.
- In the classroom setting, children are presented with the first chapter lesson of a thematic unit. Each thematic unit is comprised of three chapters and the theme is the same for all grade levels.
- Parents remain in the hall and receive an introduction to the unit and a wealth of information on how to best present the material in an age appropriate way to their children.
- After the prescribed time, children and parents come together to share what they learned. Facilitated conversation leads to an exchange of how the lesson applies to their life today, and families are challenged to go out and live their faith.

Family Session Dates and Themes

- September 9, 2018: Orientation
 - October 14, 2018: Revelation: God Made Known
 - November 11, 2018: Trinity: Three in One
 - December 9, 2018: Jesus Christ: True God, True Man
 - January 13, 2019: The Church: Divine Origin and Mission
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- February 10, 2019: Morality: Free to Choose
- March 10, 2019: Sacraments: Encounters with the Divine
- April 14, 2019: Kingdom of God: A Reign of Justice, Love, and Peace
(Palm Sunday)
- May 19, 2019**: Life and Dignity of the Human Person

**The final session will be held on the 3rd Sunday of May instead of the 2nd Sunday to avoid family conflicts with Mother's Day on May 12.

In the Home Sessions

- The material presented to parents at the Family Sessions will assist and prepare them for presenting the remaining two chapters of the unit to their children at home at their convenience over the rest of the month.
- Detailed lesson plans are available to parents in PDF format on *Alive in Christ Website* via the "In the Home" link found at <http://aliveinchrist.osv.com/family>
- When students complete a chapter at home, they take an online e-assessment at home, the results of which are sent to parents, program director and/or catechist.

Family Gatherings

Families are expected to attend at least one seasonal family gathering. Two will be offered yearly. They will be held on Saturday morning from 9:00 – 10:30 AM.

- November 17, 2018: *Advent Family Gathering*: Advent – Preparing for Christmas
- February 23, 2019: *Lenten Family Gathering*: Lent – Preparing for Easter

SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

- Students in 2nd grade will use the *Alive in Christ* textbook to prepare for the Sacraments of Penance and Eucharist.
 - Parental feedback is key so that parents are equipped with sufficient resources and support to work with their child during sacramental preparation.
 - The Sacrament of Confirmation has moved to 7th Grade and will not be celebrated until 2020. The preparation process for this sacrament is currently under review in light of these mandated changes.
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SPIRITUAL COMPONENT

Spiritual Gatherings

Families will be expected to attend two spiritual activities within the parish. These activities include any of the events and liturgies listed below. The list below is not inclusive, as other activities or event may be added to the list below prior to or during the program year as additional options for families.

- Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (Weekly on Tuesday evening in the rectory chapel from 5:30 – 9:00 PM) – come at any convenient time and for any duration
- 40 Hours Devotion (November 11, 12, 13)
- Festival of Carols (December 16)
- Ash Wednesday (March 6, 2019)
- St. Joseph Triduum (3 day event in March)
- Stations of the Cross (March 8, 15, 22, 29 & April 5, 12, & 19 @ 7 PM)
- Living Stations of the Cross (April 17, 2019)
- Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper (April 18, 2019 @ 7 PM)
- Good Friday Reflection on the Seven Last Words of Christ (April 19, 2019 @ 12 PM)
- Good Friday Veneration of the Cross (April 19, 2019 @ 3 PM)
- Easter Vigil (April 20, 2019 @ 7:30 PM)
- May Procession (May)

Sacrament of Penance (Confessions)

The 2nd Precept of the Church obliges all Catholics to receive the Sacrament of Penance a minimum of once a year unless they are in a state of mortal sin in which case they should seek the sacrament immediately. As the Family Catechesis Program does not offer an opportunity for children to receive the sacrament of Penance in a formal way as the traditional Tuesday CCD classes do, parents are expected to take their child to receive the Sacrament of Penance at least once during the year. Participating in the Sacrament of Penance does not fulfill the requirement for Spiritual Gatherings above.

The Sacrament of Penance is offered at the following times:

- Tuesday evenings from 7:00 – 7:45 PM in the rectory (call to verify availability)
 - Saturday afternoons from 4:00 – 4:45 PM in the Church chapel.
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ACTS OF MERCY COMPONENT

Families will be expected to engage in two Act of Mercy per year offer by the parish. These activities include any of the events listed below. The list below is not inclusive, as other activities or event may be added to the list below prior to or during the program year as additional options for families. When engaging in Acts of Mercy, children should be actively involved.

- Making Casseroles for St. John's Hospice (ongoing)
 - Making meals for Aid for Friends (ongoing)
 - Food Drive for Holy Innocents Food Pantry (ongoing)
 - Sandwich Sunday (3rd Sunday of the Month after 10 AM Mass)
 - Mass of Anointing (October) – make a covered dish or desert / help set up & serve the people
 - Advent Giving Tree (December)
 - Baby Bottle Drive(May-June)
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CLARIFICATIONS

DEFINING FAMILY CATECHSIS

This program is grounded in family catechesis and therefore depends on the family's participation for a student to succeed. The Program defines family as the student, and any parents and siblings living in the same household. If the family, as defined, cannot participate in a Family Formation Session, Spiritual, or Act of Mercy activity, then at least one parent must accompany the student and participate in the activity with the student. If both parents are unavailable due to work, then a grandparent, aunt, uncle, or godparent may stand in the parent's place. Parents of other students enrolled in the Program ***DO NOT*** meet this definition and may not serve as a substitute for another student's parent unless they are directly related to said student.

REQUIRED PARTICIPATION

The nature of this program encompasses all of the components outlined herein this document, explicitly the Formation, Spiritual, and Acts of Mercy Components. As such, families must meet all of the requirements for each component by the end of the Program year (May 31), or they will be prohibited from participating in the Family Catechesis option the following year. The Program will provide the opportunities for parents, students, and families to participate in various component related activities throughout the course of the year, but it is the parents' responsibility to make sure that they and the student fulfill the Program requirements.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PILOT PROGRAM¹

To qualify for this program option families must meet the following requirements:

- Attend Sunday Mass on a weekly basis
- Be a registered member of St. Albert the Great Parish for at least one year, or had children enrolled in St. Albert the Great weekly CCD Program during the 2017-2018 program year.
- Complete all registration forms and submit all required paperwork and fees at the time of registration, including a signed Family Commitment Form (available at September meeting)
- Register by May 31, 2018.
- Internet connection is required to participate

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS/INFORMATION

ATTENDANCE

- The entire family is welcome and encouraged to attend the sessions and activities. However, at the minimum, children must be accompanied by an adult family member at every session and activity.
- Families will be expected to attend all nine (9) Sunday Sessions barring extenuating circumstances, such as illness or family emergency, and no more than two sessions can be missed under such circumstances. Participation in Sports and extracurricular activities are not considered extenuating circumstances. Family vacations should not be planned for any of the Sunday sessions.
- Families that miss more than two sessions may be required to complete the remainder of the program year in the traditional weekly program.
- For those families that miss due to extenuating circumstances, we will make the session available via a Google document so that parents may review the session materials and theme at home. They will be responsible for teaching the entire unit (3 chapters) that month instead of two chapters. We also hope to have the sessions videotaped and available for viewing via a Google document as well.
- Families that do not meet all of the program requirements by the end of the program year (i.e., May 31), may not be invited to participate in this model the following year.

¹ Eligibility requirements may be modified following the completion of the pilot year.

EVALUATION / PROGRESS REPORTS

- Because of the nature of this program, Progress Reports will not be utilized.
- Progress will be evaluated through the use of e-assessments, which the parents will access via the *Alive in Christ* website upon the completion of each chapter. The results of the e-assessment will be emailed directly to the program director (DRE) for evaluation and feedback.
- All chapter and unit work would be checked each month by the catechists to ensure that families are progressing through the program as expected and are current with the schedule.
- The Archdiocesan Mid-Year and Year-End Assessments will be administered to students during the Family Sessions (January & May). A study guide for these assessments will be provided to parents a month in advance. The guides are in outline format and roughly two pages in length. The assessment is approximately 30 questions consisting of multiple choice, true & false, matching, word bank, and 1 or 2 short answer questions.

FAMILIES WITH PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN (AGES 3 – K)

- We are looking to offer a Pre-School program for families that participate in the Family Catechesis option – free of charge
- Children in this age group will work with a catechist in a classroom setting with age appropriate materials.
- Resources will be sent home with the children at the end of the session that parents can use during the month if they desire.

IMPORTANT DATES

- May 1, 2018 Online Registration begins for CCD (both options)
 - May 31, 2018 Registration for Family Catechesis Option closes.
 **Registration for traditional weekly CCD option remains open until
 September 30, 2018.
 - September 9, 2018 Family Orientation – Program Begins!
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