



# PATHWAYS

formation suite

## *Leader Guide*



Faith and Family Life  
Catholic Ministries

# Table of Contents

[An Invitation](#)

[Evangelization and Catechesis](#)

[Today's Reality](#)

[Approach and Method](#)

[Types of Formation](#)

[Types of Content](#)

[Guides](#)

[Pods or Groups](#)

[Catechists](#)

[At-Church Community](#)

[Family Realities](#)

[Family Follow Throughs](#)

[A Few Tips](#)

[Resources](#)

# An Invitation

You have been invited to accompany families in their journey of faith formation.

Pathways is an integrated and family centered formation suite designed to facilitate a personal encounter with the Trinity and sustain a lifelong development of faith within the family. We are all at different points on the journey and a one size faith formation program does not fit all. This is a shift to a greater focus on parents as the primary educators of the faith. Create a path forward that is best for your families with our resources which include home and church experiences.

Pathways puts parents at the center of teaching and sharing faith with their children. As the program leaders, your time and energy will be used to support and encourage parents to live out their vocation. Everything needed for families to have intentional conversations about Jesus, pray together, and interact with each other is included in our resources.

As families journey through this process, you are invited to accompany and guide them with love and support from the Church community. Many families have not had personal connections with church leaders. This provides new opportunities for them to experience the love and goodness of Jesus through your interactions with them.

Throughout this guide we will include quotes from the new Directory for Catechesis (DC). We encourage you to study it in its entirety, but we pulled the quotes we think are most relevant to supporting and implementing this vision. Our approach is a concrete tool rooted in the heart and mind of the Church.

*Faith is not a linear process and it participates in the development of the person, and this in turn influences the journey of faith. (DC 224)*

*It is therefore reasonable to offer pathways of catechesis that vary based on the participants' different needs, ages, and states of life. So it is indispensable to respect anthropological-developmental and theological-pastoral realities, taking into account the educational sciences. This is why it is pedagogically important, in the process of catechesis, to attribute to each stage its own importance and specificity. (DC 225)*

# Evangelization and Catechesis

It is important to revisit the purpose and goal of evangelization and catechesis so beautifully given to us by the Church. Evangelization encompasses catechesis with the one goal of bringing all people into communion with God.

*“The Church exists in order to evangelize,”...The close connection between evangelization and catechesis therefore becomes the distinctive feature of this Directory. It is intended to present a pathway along which there can be seen an intimate union between the announcement of the kerygma and its maturation. (DC Preface)*

*From the missionary mandate of the Risen One emerge the words which pertain to evangelization, intimately connected to one another: “proclaim” (Mk 16: 15); “make disciples, baptizing and teaching” (Mt 28: 19-20), “you shall be witnesses” (Acts 1: 8), “do this in remembrance of me” (Lk 22: 19), “that you love one another” (Jn 15: 12). In this way the characteristics of a dynamic of proclamation take shape, in which there is a close connection between the recognition of God’s action in the heart of every person, the primacy of the Holy Spirit, and the universal openness to every person. Evangelization is therefore a reality that is “rich, complex and dynamic,” and in its development incorporates various possibilities: witness and proclamation, word and sacrament, inner change and social transformation. (DC16)*

*Evangelizing is not, in the first place, the delivery of a doctrine; but rather, making present and announcing Jesus Christ. (DC 29)*

*Evangelization has as its ultimate aim the fulfillment of human life. (DC 30)*

*Evangelization is an ecclesial process, inspired and supported by the Holy Spirit, through which the Gospel is proclaimed and spread throughout the world. (DC 31)*

*In the process of evangelization, the Church:*

- driven by charity, permeates and transforms the whole temporal order, incorporating cultures and offering the contribution of the Gospel so that they may be renewed from within;*
- draws near to all humanity with attitudes of solidarity, fellowship, and dialogue, thus bearing witness to the Christians’ newness of life, so that those who meet them may be prompted to wonder about the meaning of life and the reasons for their brotherhood and hope;*
- explicitly declares the Gospel through the first proclamation, issuing the call to conversion;*
- initiates into Christian faith and life, through the catechumenal process (catechesis, sacraments, witness of charity, fraternal experience), those who convert to Jesus Christ or return to following him, incorporating the former and restoring the latter into the Christian community;*
- through ongoing education in the faith, the celebration of the sacraments and the exercise of charity nourishes the gift of communion among the faithful and supports the mission, sending all the disciples of Christ to proclaim the Gospel in the world, with works and words. (DC 31)*

*Recognition of the primacy of grace is fundamental in evangelization, right from the first moment. The disciples of Jesus, therefore, sharing life with all, bear witness even without words to the joy of the Gospel that elicits questions. (DC 33a)*

*Witness, which is also expressed as respectful dialogue, at the appropriate time, becomes proclamation. (DC 33a)*

*The Christian community, cooperating with the work of the Holy Spirit, welcomes the interest of those who are seeking the Lord and during the time necessary, by means of those it has designated, carries out a first form of evangelization and discernment through accompaniment and the presentation of the kerygma. (DC 33c)*

*Catechesis, a privileged stage in the process of evangelization, is generally directed toward persons who have already received the first proclamation, within whom it promotes the processes of initiation, growth, and maturation in the faith. It is however true that, if it is still useful to make conceptual distinctions between pre-evangelization, first proclamation, catechesis, ongoing formation, in the present context it is no longer possible to stress such differences. In fact, on the one hand those today who ask for or have already received the grace of the sacraments often do not have an explicit experience of faith or do not intimately know its power and warmth; on the other, a formal proclamation limited to the bare enunciation of the concepts of the faith would not permit an understanding of the faith itself, which is instead a new horizon of life that is opened wide, starting from the encounter with the Lord Jesus. (DC 56)*

*This demand to which the Church must respond at the present time brings into focus the need for a catechesis that in a consistent way can be called kerygmatic, meaning a catechesis that is an “entering more deeply into the kerygma.” Catechesis, which cannot always be distinguished from the first proclamation, is called to be in the first place a proclamation of the faith, and must not pass on to other ecclesial actions the task of assisting in the discovery of the beauty of the Gospel. It is important that every person should discover that belief is worthwhile precisely through catechesis, which in this way is no longer limited to being a mere time of more harmonious growth in the faith but contributes to generating faith itself and allows the discovery of its greatness and credibility. The proclamation can therefore no longer be considered simply the first stage of faith, preliminary to catechesis, but rather the essential dimension of every moment of catechesis. (DC 57)*

*Kerygmatic catechesis, which goes to the very heart of the faith and grasps the essence of the Christian message, is a catechesis which manifests the action of the Holy Spirit, who communicates God’s saving love in Jesus Christ and continues to give himself so that every human being may have the fullness of life. The different formulations of the kerygma, which necessarily open pathways of discovery, correspond to existential doorways into the mystery. Catechesis as mystagogic initiation introduces the believer into the living experience of the Christian community, the true setting of the life of faith. (DC 2)*

*At the center of every process of catechesis is the living encounter with Christ. “Accordingly, the definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.” (DC 75)*

*The encounter with Christ involves the person in his totality: heart, mind, senses. It does not concern only the mind, but also the body and above all the heart. (DC 76)*

*Catechesis makes the initial conversion ripen and helps Christians to give a complete meaning to their existence, educating them in a mentality of faith in keeping with the Gospel, <sup>31</sup> to the point of gradually coming to feel, think and act like Christ. (DC 77)*

*Catechesis “has the twofold objective of maturing the initial faith and of educating the true disciple of Christ by means of a deeper and more systematic knowledge of the person and the message of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (DC Preface)*

*The goal of catechesis, which is the living encounter with the Lord who transforms life. (DC Preface)*

*It must however be noted that “catechesis for adults, since it deals with persons who are capable of an adherence that is fully responsible, must be considered the chief form of catechesis. All the other forms, which are indeed always necessary, are in some way oriented to it. This implies that the catechesis of other age groups should have it for a point of reference.” (DC 77)*

*In order to form believers for an integral Christian life, catechesis therefore pursues the following tasks: leading to knowledge of the faith; initiating into the celebration of the mystery; forming for life in Christ; teaching to pray; and introducing to community life. (DC 79)*

*All of catechesis needs to be “a catechesis of grace, for it is by grace that we are saved and again it is by grace that our works can bear fruit for eternal life.” The teaching of the truth, therefore, begins with the loving initiative of God and continues with the human response that comes from listening and is always the fruit of grace. “An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. 1 Jn 4: 19), and therefore we can move forward.” Although the fruits of catechesis do not depend on the capacity to plan and to act, God certainly asks for real collaboration with his grace, and in service to the cause of the Kingdom he therefore calls for the investment of all the resources of intelligence and of execution that catechetical activity requires. (DC174)*

*“Proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow him is not only something right and true, but also something beautiful, capable of filling life with new splendor and profound joy, even in the midst of difficulties.” Catechesis must always convey the beauty of the Gospel that resounded from the lips of Jesus for all: the poor, the simple, sinners, tax collectors and prostitutes, who felt welcomed, understood and helped, invited and educated by the Lord himself. In fact, the proclamation of the merciful and gratuitous love of God that was fully manifested in Jesus Christ, dead and risen, is the heart of the kerygma. There are also aspects of the evangelical message that are generally difficult to accept, especially where the Gospel calls to conversion and the recognition of sin. Catechesis, however, is not primarily a presentation of morality, but the proclamation of the beauty of God, which can be experienced, and which touches the heart and the mind, transforming life. (DC 175)*

*Moreover, catechesis initiates believers into the mystery of communion as lived, not only in*

*relationship with the Father through Christ in the Spirit, but also in the community of believers through the work of the same Spirit. In educating for communion, catechesis educates for living in the Church and as the Church. (DC 176)*

## Today's Reality

It can be difficult to get honest about the state of faith formation in our Church today. On a whole, the traditional classroom model is no longer producing the fruit of an active faith life. Participation in the liturgical and formational life of the church is in steep decline. Change is hard, but necessary. Acknowledging this reality does not negate the truth that the traditional model worked for an era. It does however see how the lives of families today have changed and seeks to meet them with the never changing truth of the Gospel in new ways.

*A closer look at the cultural context brings out the new problems with which the Church is being called to live: two in particular. The first is the phenomenon of digital culture, which brings along with it a second implication, the globalization of culture. Both of these are so interconnected that they shape each other and produce phenomena that highlight a radical change in the lives of people. The need for formation that pays attention to the individual often seems to become blurred as one-size-fits-all models take hold. The temptation to adapt to forms of international standardization is a risk that is not to be underestimated, especially in the context of formation in the life of faith. Faith, in fact, is transmitted through interpersonal connection and is nourished within the circle of the community. (DC Preface)*

*Our times are complex, pervaded by profound changes, and in the Churches of ancient tradition are often marked by phenomena of detachment from a lived ecclesial and faith experience. The ecclesial journey itself is marked by difficulties and by the need for spiritual, moral, and pastoral renewal. And yet the Holy Spirit continues to arouse the thirst for God within people, and within the Church a new fervor, new methods, and new expressions for the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ. (DC 38)*

*Over the course of Church history many charisms of service to the word of God have opened different methodological paths, a sign of vitality and richness. (DC 195)*

*This missionary impulse also leads to a true reform of ecclesial structures and dynamics, in such a way that they may all become more missionary, meaning capable of enlivening with boldness and creativity both the cultural and religious landscape and the personal horizon of every human being. Every one of the baptized, insofar as he is a "missionary disciple," is an active participant in this ecclesial mission. (DC 40)*

*It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but 'by attraction.'" (DC 41c)*

*Evangelizing does not mean occupying a given territory, but rather eliciting spiritual processes in the lives of persons so that the faith may become rooted and significant. The evangelization of culture requires getting to the heart of culture itself, where new themes and paradigms are generated, reaching the deepest core of individuals and of societies in order to illuminate them from within with the light of the Gospel. (DC 43)*

*In this renewed awareness of her vocation, the Church is also re-envisioning catechesis as one of her works in a missionary going forth. This means being willing to seek out the glimmers of truth that are already present in various human activities, trusting that God is mysteriously active in the heart of the human being before this has been explicitly reached by the Gospel. In this sense, she will find ways to draw near to the people of our time, walking alongside them wherever they happen to be. Catechesis, moreover, forms believers for mission, accompanying them in the maturation of attitudes of faith and making them aware that they are missionary disciples, called to participate actively in the proclamation of the Gospel and to make the Kingdom of God present in the world: "The Church's closeness to Jesus is part of a common journey; 'communion and mission are profoundly interconnected.'" (DC 50)*

*"there is no greater freedom than that of allowing oneself to be guided by the Holy Spirit, renouncing the attempt to plan and control everything to the last detail, and instead letting him enlighten, guide and direct us, leading us wherever he wills. The Holy Spirit knows well what is needed in every time and place." (DC 39)*

*The very widespread environments that are patterned after school buildings do not constitute the best places for the unfolding of catechetical activities. (DC 222)*

*It is however true that the dynamic of the Church that goes forth, that goes through catechesis, also has implications with regard to space. Encouragement should be given to attempts at catechesis in different places: the home, the office, educational, cultural, and recreational environments, prisons, etc. These places, which are often more loosely focussed than those of the Christian community, are suitable for casual catechesis because they create more familiar relationships, and in this more visible connection with everyday life catechesis can turn out to be more compelling. (DC 223)*



# Approach and Method

Pathways is a process of formation that seeks to meet families in their concrete situation, come alongside them, and lead them on a path home to heaven. It is catechumenal in nature marked by a spirit of accompaniment. Formed by the pedagogy of Jesus we are encouraged to walk with others as Christ humbly walks with us. The family must become the locus of faith formation. Beyond our specific communities, our family remains the most stable and important foundation of faith. We strive to create a product that speaks into the lives of families with relevant language and beauty.

*Revelation is the great educational work of God... In it we find the distinctive elements that can help lead us to recognize a divine pedagogy, one which is capable of profoundly influencing the Church's educational activity. Catechesis also follows in the footsteps of God's pedagogy. From the very beginning of salvation history, the Revelation of God manifests itself as an initiative of love, shown in countless moments of careful instruction. God posed questions to humanity, and required a response from them. (DC 157)*

*The goal of Revelation is the salvation of every person, which is realized through an original and efficacious pedagogy of God throughout history. In Sacred Scripture God reveals himself as a merciful father, a teacher, a sage (cf. Dt 8: 5; Hos 11: 3-4; Prv 3: 11-12), who meets human beings in the condition in which he finds them and frees them from evil, drawing them to himself with bonds of love. Progressively and with patience he leads the chosen people toward maturity, and together with it any individual who listens to him. (DC 158)*

*The disciples experienced the pedagogy of Jesus, the distinctive features of which are narrated in the Gospels: welcoming the poor, the simple, the sinners; proclaiming the kingdom of God as good news; a style of love which frees from evil and which promotes life. Word and silence, parable and image become authentic pedagogical methods for revealing the mystery of his love. (DC 159)*

*Jesus paid careful attention to the formation of his disciples in preparation for evangelization. He presented himself to them as their only teacher and, at the same time, as a patient and faithful friend (cf. Jn 15: 15; Mk 9: 33-37; Mk 10: 41-45). He taught them the truth through his whole life. He provoked them with questions (cf. Mk 8: 14-21, 27). He explained to them in greater depth what he proclaimed to the crowd (cf. Mk 4: 34; Lk 12: 41). He introduced them to prayer (cf. Lk 11: 1-2). He sent them on mission not alone but as a little community (cf. Lk 10: 1-20). He promised them the Holy Spirit, who would lead them into all truth (cf. Jn 15: 26; Acts 4: 31) and sustain them in moments of difficulty (cf. Mt 10: 20; Jn 15: 26; Acts 4: 31). Jesus's way of relating to others therefore is distinguished by its exquisitely educational quality. Jesus is able to both welcome and provoke the Samaritan woman in a journey of gradual acceptance of grace and willingness to convert. The Risen Lord draws near to the two disciples of Emmaus, walks with them, dialogues with them and shares their sorrow. At the same time, he provokes them and opens their hearts, leads them to the experience of the Eucharist and opens their eyes to recognize him; finally, he steps aside to leave a space for the missionary initiative of the disciples. (DC 160)*

*Catechesis is inspired by the features of the divine pedagogy just described. In this way, it becomes pedagogical action at the service of the dialogue of salvation between God and humanity. (DC 165)*

*The way of God who reveals himself and saves, together with the Church's response of faith in history, becomes the source and model for the pedagogy of the faith. Catechesis thus presents itself as a process that allows the maturation of the faith through respect for the journey of each individual believer. (DC 166)*

*The mystery of the incarnation inspires catechetical pedagogy. This also has implications for the methodology of catechesis, which must refer to the word of God and at the same time attend to the authentic demands of human experience... It is important to keep in mind that the educational goal of catechesis determines the methodological choices. (DC 194)*

*Catechesis should be inspired by the catechumenal model. (DC 2)*

*The requirement "not [to] assume that our audience understands the full background to what we are saying, or is capable of relating what we say to the very heart of the Gospel" is the reason both for affirming the kerygmatic nature of catechesis and for considering its catechumenal inspiration. (DC 61)*

*It therefore has an explicit missionary intention and is structured as an organic and cumulative whole for initiation into Christian faith and life. Precisely because of its missionary character, the catechumenate can also inspire the catechesis directed toward those who, although they have already received the gift of baptismal grace, do not actually taste its richness: in this sense, one speaks of catechesis inspired by the catechumenal model or a post-baptismal catechumenate or a catechesis of initiation into Christian life. This inspiration does not forget that the baptized "by baptism . . . have already become members of the Church and children of God. Hence their conversion is based on the baptism they have already received, the effects of which they must develop." (DC 61)*

*The catechumenal inspiration of catechesis does not mean reproducing the catechumenate in a servile manner, but taking on its style and its formative dynamism, responding also to the "need for a mystagogical renewal, one which would assume very different forms based on each educational community's discernment." (DC 64)*

*The community character: the catechumenate is a process that takes place in a concrete community, that provides an experience of the communion given by God and is therefore aware of its responsibility for the proclamation of the faith. Catechesis inspired by the catechumenate integrates the contribution of various charisms and ministries (catechists, those who work in liturgy and charity, heads of ecclesial groups, together with the ordained ministers . . . ), revealing that the womb of regeneration in faith is the whole community. (DC 64d)*

*The progressive character of the formative experience: 19 the catechumenate is a dynamic process structured in periods that succeed one another in a gradual and progressive way. This evolving character responds to the actual life story of the person, who grows and matures over time. The*

*Church, patiently accompanying her children and respecting the pace of their maturing, shows herself to be an attentive mother. (DC 64f)*

*The catechesis of Christian initiation is a basic, essential, organic, systematic, and integral formation in the faith. (DC 71)*

*The present understanding of the formative dynamics of the person requires that intimate communion with Christ, already indicated in the existing Magisterium as the ultimate end of the catechetical initiative, should not only be identified as a goal but also brought about through a process of accompaniment. In fact, the overall process of internalizing the Gospel involves the whole person in his unique experience of life. Only a catechesis that strives to help each individual to develop his own unique response of faith can reach the specified goal. This is the reason why the present Directory reiterates the importance of having catechesis accompany the development of a mentality of faith in a dynamic of transformation, which is ultimately an action of the spirit. (DC 3)*

*Human experience is integral to catechesis, in its identity and process and also in contents and method, because it is not only the place in which the word of God is proclaimed but also the space in which God speaks. The experience of individuals or of society as a whole must be approached with an attitude of love, acceptance, and respect. God acts in every person's life and in history, and the catechist imitates Jesus in being open to this presence. This sets him free from thinking of the person and of history solely as recipients of the initiative and establishes a relationship of reciprocity and dialogue, in listening to what the Holy Spirit is already silently accomplishing. (DC 197)*

*Catechesis, following the example of Jesus, helps to illuminate and interpret the experiences of life in the light of the Gospel... If catechesis neglects to correlate human experiences with the revealed message, it falls into the danger of artificial juxtapositions or misunderstandings of the truth. (DC 199)*

*The family is a community of love and of life, made up of "a complex of interpersonal relationships . . . —married life, fatherhood and motherhood, filiation and fraternity—through which each human person is introduced into the 'human family' and into the 'family of God,' which is the Church." The future of persons and of the human and ecclesial communities depends to a large extent on the family, the basic cell of society. Thanks to the family, the Church becomes a family of families and is enriched with the life of these domestic churches. Therefore, "with inner joy and deep comfort, the Church looks to the families who remain faithful to the teachings of the Gospel, encouraging them and thanking them for the testimony they offer. For they bear witness, in a credible way, to the beauty of marriage as indissoluble and perpetually faithful." (DC 226)*

*The family is a proclamation of faith in that it is the natural place in which faith can be lived in a simple and spontaneous manner. It "has an unique privilege: transmitting the Gospel by rooting it in the context of profound human values. On this human base, Christian initiation is more profound: the awakening of the sense of God; the first steps in prayer; education of the moral conscience; formation in the Christian sense of human love, understood as a reflection*

*of the love of God the Father, the Creator. It is, indeed, a Christian education more witnessed to than taught, more occasional than systematic, more ongoing and daily than structured into periods.” (DC 227)*

*Catechesis in the family therefore has the task of revealing to those who take part in family life, above all to the spouses and parents, the gift that God gives to them through the sacrament of marriage. (DC 228)*

*The Church proclaims the Gospel to the family. The Christian community is a family of families and is itself the family of God. Community and family are, each for the other, a constant and reciprocal point of reference: while the community receives from the family an understanding of the faith that is immediate and connected in a natural way to the affairs of life, the family in turn receives from the community an explicit key for using faith to reinterpret its experience. Aware of this profound connection, the Church, in her devotion to evangelization, proclaims the Gospel to families, showing them by experience that this is “joy that ‘fills hearts and lives,’ because in Christ we have been ‘set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness.’” (DC 229)*

*At the present time, catechesis with families is permeated by the kerygma, because even “In and among families, the Gospel message should always resound; the core of that message, the kerygma, is what is most beautiful, most excellent, most appealing and at the same time most necessary. This message has to occupy the center of all evangelizing activity.” Moreover, in the dynamic of missionary conversion catechesis with families is characterized by a style of humble understanding and by a proclamation that is concrete, not theoretical and detached from personal problems. The community, in its efforts to bring evangelization and catechesis into families, marks out paths of faith that should help them to have a clear awareness of their own identity and mission: it therefore accompanies and supports them in their task of transmitting life, helps them in the exercise of their inherent duty of education, and promotes an authentic family spirituality. In this way the family is made aware of its role and becomes, in the community and along with it, an active participant in the work of evangelization. (DC 230)*

*The family proclaims the Gospel. As a domestic church founded on the sacrament of marriage that also has a missionary dimension, the Christian family takes part in the Church’s mission of evangelization and is therefore an agent of catechesis. “The work of handing on the faith to children, in the sense of facilitating its expression and growth, helps the whole family in its evangelizing mission. It naturally begins to spread the faith to all around them, even outside of the family circle.” In addition to its natural service of child-rearing, the family is therefore called to contribute to building up the Christian community and to bear witness to the Gospel in society. “The ministry of evangelization and catechesis of the Church of the home is rooted in and derives from the one mission of the Church and is ordained to the upbuilding of the one Body of Christ, it must remain in intimate communion and collaborate responsibly with all the other evangelizing and catechetical activities present and at work in the ecclesial community at the diocesan and parochial levels.” The catechesis of the family is therefore every specific contribution that Christian families make, with the sensibility proper to them, to the various journeys of faith that the community proposes. (DC 231)*

*“For Christian parents the mission to educate, a mission rooted, as we have said, in their participation in God’s creating activity, has a new specific source in the sacrament of marriage, which consecrates them for the strictly Christian education of their children.”* 17 Believing parents, with their daily example of life, have the most effective capacity to transmit the beauty of the Christian faith to their children. *“Enabling families to take up their role as active agents of the family apostolate calls for ‘an effort at evangelization and catechesis inside the family.’”* 18 The greatest challenge in this situation is for couples, mothers and fathers, active participants in catechesis, to overcome the mentality of delegation that is so common, according to which the faith is set aside for specialists in religious education. This mentality is, at times, fostered by communities that struggle to organize family centered catechesis which starts from the families themselves. *“The Church is called to cooperate with parents through suitable pastoral initiatives, assisting them in the fulfillment of their educational mission” to become above all the first catechists of their own children.* (DC 124)

*In her history, the Church has communicated her faith through Sacred Scripture (biblical language), liturgical symbols and ceremonies (symbolic-liturgical language), the writings of the Fathers, Creeds, formulations of the Magisterium (doctrinal language), and the witness of the saints and martyrs (performative language). These are the main languages of the ecclesial faith that allow believers to share a common tongue.* (DC 205)

*At the same time, catechesis creatively adopts the languages of peoples’ cultures, through which the faith is expressed in a characteristic way, and helps ecclesial communities to find new ones adapted to the hearers.* (DC 206)

*Over the course of the centuries, the Church has been like a family community that, in different forms, has continued to narrate the story of salvation, incorporating into herself those who have welcomed it... Narrative language is particularly appropriate for the transmission of the faith in a culture that is increasingly poor in deep and effective models of communication.* (DC 208)

*Within the Church, there is often a habit of one-directional communication: preaching, teaching, and the presentation of dogmatic summaries. Moreover, the written word alone struggles to speak to the young, who are used to a language consisting of a combination of written word, sound and images.* (DC 214)

*Virtual reality cannot however replace the spiritual, sacramental, and ecclesial reality experienced in direct encounter among persons: “we ourselves are means of communication and the real problem does not concern the acquisition of the latest technologies, even if these make a valid presence possible. It is necessary to be absolutely clear that the God in whom we believe, who loves all men and women intensely, wants to reveal himself through the means at our disposal, however poor they are, because it is he who is at work, he who transforms and saves us.” What is needed in order to bear witness to the Gospel is an authentic form of communication that is the fruit of real interaction among persons.* (DC 217)

*In the New Testament, all beauty is concentrated in the person of Jesus Christ, revealer of the divine who “reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature” (Heb 1: 3). His*



*Gospel is captivating because it is news that is beautiful, good, joyful, full of hope. He, “full of grace and truth” (Jn 1: 14), taking humanity upon himself, recounted through the parables the beauty of God’s activity. In his relationship with men and women he spoke beautiful words that with their efficacy heal the depths of the soul: “Your sins are forgiven” (Mk 2: 5), “Neither do I condemn you” (Jn 8: 11), “God so loved the world” (Jn 3: 16), “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11: 28). He performed beautiful actions: he healed, he set free, he accompanied humanity and touched its wounds. Enduring the cruelty of condemnation to death as the one who “had no form or comeliness” (Is 53: 2), he was recognized as “the fairest of the sons of men” (Ps 45: 2). In this way he led humanity, purified, into the glory of the Father, where he himself is found “at the right hand of the Majesty on high,” (Heb 1: 3) and has thus revealed all the transformative power of his Passover. (DC 107)*

*The Church, therefore, bears in mind that in order to reach the human heart the proclamation of the Risen One must shine forth with goodness, truth, and beauty. In this sense, it is necessary “that every form of catechesis [ . . . ] attend to the ‘way of beauty’ (via pulchritudinis).” 54 All beauty can be a path that helps lead to the encounter with God, but the criterion of its authenticity cannot be only that of aesthetics. There must be discernment between true beauty and the forms that are apparently beautiful but empty, or even harmful, like the forbidden fruit in the earthly paradise (cf. Gn 3: 6). (DC 108)*

*Beauty is always and inseparably steeped with goodness and truth. (DC 109)*

*The way of evangelization is the way of beauty, and therefore every form of beauty is a source of catechesis. In demonstrating the primacy of grace, manifest in a special way in the Blessed Virgin Mary; in making known the lives of the saints as true witnesses to the beauty of the faith; in giving prominence to the beauty and mysteriousness of creation; in discovering and cherishing the incredible and immense liturgical and artistic heritage of the Church; in valuing the highest forms of contemporary art, catechesis shows concretely the infinite beauty of God, which is also expressed in the works of human beings (cf. SC 122), and leads those who are catechized toward the beautiful gift that the Father has made in his Son. (DC 109)*

## Types of Formation

**Progressive Formation:** Our progressive formation focuses on the initial steps of formation, the proclamation of the kerygma and a foundational catechesis on the Creed. It is meant for those who are new to the faith or have been out of practice for some time. Families that have participated in these steps and/or remain active in living the faith can proceed directly to immediate or ongoing formation. These families should be invited to help accompany other families by modeling and support.

*“we have rediscovered the fundamental role of the first announcement or kerygma, which needs to be the center of all evangelizing activity and all efforts at Church renewal. [ . . . ] This first proclamation is called ‘first’ not because it exists at the beginning and can then be forgotten*

*or replaced by other more important things. It is first in a qualitative sense because it is the principal proclamation, the one which we must hear again and again in different ways, the one which we must announce one way or another throughout the process of catechesis, at every level and moment. [ . . . ] We must not think that in catechesis the kerygma gives way to a supposedly more 'solid' formation. Nothing is more solid, profound, secure, meaningful and wisdom-filled than that initial proclamation. All Christian formation consists of entering more deeply into the kerygma, which is reflected in and constantly illumines, the work of catechesis, thereby enabling us to understand more fully the significance of every subject which the latter treats. It is the message capable of responding to the desire for the infinite which abides in every human heart." (DC Preface)*

*Initiatory catechesis is at the service of the profession of faith. Those who have already met Jesus Christ feel the growing desire to get to know him more intimately, expressing a first inclination toward the Gospel. In the Christian community catechesis, together with the liturgical ceremonies, works of charity, and experience of fraternity, "initiates them in knowledge of faith and apprenticeship in the Christian life, thereby promoting a spiritual journey which brings about 'a progressive change in outlook and morals' (AG 13). (DC 34)*

**Immediate Formation:** Our immediate formation is focused on preparation for a specific sacrament and is designed to be experienced right before its reception.

*The catechesis of parents whose children are making the journey of Christian initiation: the community fosters the involvement of parents in their children's journey of initiation, which for some of them is a moment to deepen their faith and for others is an authentic space for its first proclamation. (DC 232d)*

**Ongoing Formation:** Our ongoing formation is the part of our suite that will continue to expand and is designed to aid the lifelong development of faith within a family.

*Catechesis, being at the service of ongoing education in the faith, exists in relationship with the different dimensions of the Christian life. (DC 74)*

*Intergenerational catechesis envisions the journey of faith as a formative experience not aimed at a particular age group but shared among different generations within a family or a community, on the pathway marked out by the liturgical year. This initiative makes the most of the exchange of the experience of faith among the generations, taking inspiration from the first Christian communities. (DC 232e)*

# Types of Content

## At-Home:

- Family Meeting: The family meeting structure includes: a gathering ritual, opening prayer, check-in, experiential activity, teaching, and closing prayer. Each family meeting is designed to take 20-40 minutes and is designed for the entire family to participate in together.
- Parent Meeting: The parent meeting structure includes: an invitation that often includes an activity to facilitate reflection and conversation and concludes with a prayer.
- Module: Modules are short self-guided experiences designed to facilitate study and reflection.

## At-Church:

- Session: Sessions are facilitated by a leader and follow a similar structure to our family meetings. It is a time to model the method in-person.

# Sources of Content

Our resources are sourced from: the Word of God, Tradition, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, magisterial documents, the liturgical rites, the lives of the Saints, human experience, and years of ministry with families.

*Catechesis draws its message from the Word of God, which is its main source. Therefore, "it is essential that the revealed word radically enrich our catechesis and all our efforts to pass on the faith." (DC 91)*

*The Catechism is "an official text of the Church's Magisterium, which authoritatively gathers in a precise form, and in an organic synthesis the events and fundamental salvific truths which express the faith common to the People of God and which constitute the indispensable basic reference for catechesis." (DC 184)*

*Catechesis is, among other things, a mediation of the pronouncements of the Magisterium. (DC 94)*

*The liturgy is one of the essential and indispensable sources of the Church's catechesis, not only because catechesis is able to draw its contents, vocabulary, actions, and words of faith from the liturgy, but above all because the two belong to one another in the very act of believing. (DC 95)*



*Catechesis therefore cannot be thought of merely as preparation for the sacraments, but must be understood in relationship to liturgical experience. (DC 96)*

*The testimonies of life and death for the Lord offered by the saints and martyrs have been authentic sequentiae sancti Evangelii, Gospel passages capable of proclaiming Christ and eliciting and nourishing faith in him. (DC 99)*

*The apparitions of the Virgin Mary recognized by the Church, the lives and writings of the saints and martyrs of every culture and people are a true source of catechesis. (DC 100)*

## Guides

Two video guides are available to help parents and families imagine and experience our at-home approach. They should be shown at an introductory meeting or shared with the families before they begin the family meeting process in any of our programs. The video for parents is made to inspire and equip them to lead these experiences at home. The video for the entire family is made to lead the entire family through a general family meeting and model the process for them. Watch these [videos](#) and decide when they could best be utilized.

A leader guide is also available for each resource that explains the intentionality, structure, and implementation of the content.

## Pods or Groups

Faith is best practiced and encouraged in small faith communities. We believe our resources are best implemented in family pods or small groups. We suggest 6-8 families per pod, accompanied by a catechist/family coach/group leader. These pods will journey together throughout a program sharing fellowship, wisdom, and stories from their faith experiences at home. The pods can meet periodically in-person or via Zoom to check in with one another.

*The group is important in personal formation processes. This applies to all age brackets: children, who receive help in becoming properly socialized; young people, who feel very keenly the need for authentic relationships; adults who want to experience sharing and co-responsibility in the Church and in society. The catechist is called to awaken within the group the experience of community as the most coherent expression of the Church's life, which finds its most visible form in the celebration of the Eucharist. If it is an authentic place for relationships among people, the experience of the group is fertile soil for welcoming and sharing the message of*

*salvation. Alongside the proclamation of the Gospel in community form, the communication of the faith also requires person-to-person contact. (DC 219)*

*Catechesis in groups of spouses and in groups of families is carried out by the married couples themselves. These journeys of catechesis are intended to develop a conjugal and family spirituality capable of restoring strength and vitality to married life, rediscovering the spousal dimension of the covenant between God and humanity and the role of the family in building the kingdom of God. (DC 232f)*

## Catechists

Our approach re-appropriates the role of a catechist from being in front of a group of children to walking beside parents and families as a coach or group leader. With the catechesis being largely taken care of by the resources, it frees the catechist to focus on developing relationships that connect the families with the Lord and the community. They will teach by their witness and credibility of life, along with helping to develop the theological truths being taught.

*The process of evangelization, and of catechesis as part of it, is above all a spiritual action. This demands that catechists be true “evangelizers with the Spirit” and the pastors’ faithful co-workers. (DC 4)*

*By virtue of Baptism and Confirmation, Christians are incorporated into Christ and participate in his office as priest, prophet, and king (cf. LG 31, AA 2); they are witnesses to the Gospel, proclaiming it by word and example of Christian life; but some “can also be called upon to cooperate with Bishops and priests in the exercise of the ministry of the Word.” In the multiplicity of ministries and services with which the Church realizes her mission of evangelization, the “ministry of catechesis” occupies a significant place, indispensable for the growth of the faith. This ministry provides an introduction to the faith and, together with the liturgical ministry, begets children of God in the womb of the Church. The specific vocation of the catechist therefore has its root in the common vocation of the people of God, called to serve God’s plan of salvation on behalf of humanity. (DV 110)*

*The catechist belongs to a Christian community and is an expression of it. His service is lived within a community that is the main provider of accompaniment in the faith. (DC 111)*

*The catechist is a Christian who receives a particular calling from God that, when accepted in faith, empowers him for the service of the transmission of faith and for the task of initiating others into the Christian life. (DC 112)*

*Through this calling, the catechist is made a participant in Jesus’s mission of introducing disciples into his filial relationship with the Father. The true protagonist of all authentic*

*catechesis is however the Holy Spirit, who by means of the profound union with Jesus Christ which is nurtured by every catechist, gives efficacy to human efforts in catechetical activity. This activity is carried out in the bosom of the Church: the catechist is a witness to her living Tradition and a mediator who facilitates the incorporation of new disciples of Christ into his ecclesial Body. (DC 112)*

*The catechist is:*

- A witness of faith and keeper of the memory of God; in experiencing the goodness and truth of the Gospel in his encounter with the person of Jesus, the catechist keeps, nourishes, and bears witness to the new life that stems from this, and becomes a sign for others. The faith contains the memory of God's history with humanity. Keeping this memory, reawakening it in others, and placing it at the service of the proclamation is the specific vocation of the catechist. The testimony of his life is necessary for the credibility of the mission. Recognizing his own frailty before the mercy of God, the catechist does not cease to be the sign of hope for his brothers;*
- A teacher and a mystagogue who introduces others to the mystery of God, revealed in the paschal mystery of Christ; as an icon of Jesus the teacher, the catechist has the twofold task of transmitting the content of the faith and leading others into the mystery of the faith itself. The catechist is called to open others to the truth about human beings and their ultimate vocation, communicating the knowledge of Christ and at the same time introducing them to the various dimensions of the Christian life, unveiling the mysteries of salvation contained in the deposit of faith and renewed in the Church's liturgy;*
- An accompanier and educator of those who are entrusted to him by the Church; the catechist is an expert in the art of accompaniment, has educational expertise, is able to listen and enter into the dynamics of human growth, becomes a traveling companion with patience and a sense of gradualness, in docility to the action of the Spirit and through a process of formation helps his brothers to mature in the Christian life and journey toward God. The catechist, an expert in humanity, knows the joys and hopes of human beings, their sadness and distress (cf. GS 1) and is able to situate them in relation to the Gospel of Jesus. (DC 113)*

*At the beginning of Christianity, formation, which was lived in experiential form, revolved around the vital encounter with Jesus Christ, proclaimed with authenticity and witnessed to in life. The character of witness became the salient feature of the whole formative process, which gradually introduced the believer into the mystery of the Church's faith. Above all in a period like the present, it is important to take into serious consideration the rapidity of social change and the plurality of cultures, with the challenges that stem from this. All of this highlights the fact that the formation of catechists requires particular attention because the quality of pastoral initiatives is necessarily connected to the persons who bring them into being. (DC 130)*

*The work of the catechist consists in finding and drawing attention to the signs of God's action already present in the lives of persons and, by using these as an example, present the Gospel as a transformative power for the whole of existence, to which it will give full meaning. The accompaniment of a person on a journey of growth and conversion is necessarily marked by gradualness, in that the act of believing implies a progressive discovery of the mystery of God and an openness and entrustment to him that grows over time. (DC 179)*

*Listening to the needs of persons, pastoral discernment, concrete preparation, implementation and evaluation of the pathways of faith constitute the moments of a process of ongoing formation for the individual catechists. The group of catechists is the real context in which each one can be continually evangelized and remain open to new formative contributions. (DC 134)*

*To avoid the risk of falling into a sterile pastoral over-exertion, the catechist should be formed as a missionary disciple capable of starting out ever anew from his experience of God, who sends him to join his brothers on their journey. This missionary spirituality, understood as an encounter with others, an effort in the world, and a passion for evangelization, nourishes the life of the catechist and saves him from individualism, from self-absorption, from the crisis of identity, and from the collapse of fervor. (DC 135a)*

*Style of accompaniment: the Church feels the duty of forming its catechists in the art of personal accompaniment, both by proposing to them the experience of being accompanied in order to grow in discipleship, and by enabling them and sending them to accompany their brothers. This style calls for a humble willingness to allow oneself to be touched by the questions and confronted by the situations of life, with a gaze full of compassion but also respectful of the other's freedom. The new development to which the catechist is called resides in the proximity, in the unconditional acceptance and in the gratuitousness with which he makes himself available to walk beside others in order to listen to them and explain the Scriptures (cf. Lk 24: 13-35; Acts 8: 26-39), without establishing the route in advance, without demanding to see the fruits, and without holding anything back for himself. (DC 135c)*

*In the first place, it is necessary that the catechist develop docibilitas, meaning the willingness to be touched by grace, by life, by persons in a serene and positive attitude toward reality in order to learn how to learn. (DC 135e)*

*The formation of the catechist includes various dimensions. The deepest one has to do with being a catechist, even before acting as a catechist. Formation, in fact, helps him to mature as a person, as a believer, and as an apostle. This dimension is also viewed today in the sense of "knowing-how to be with," which highlights the extent to which personal identity is always a relational identity. (DC 136)*

*The effort to acquire these abilities, on the other hand, must not lead to thinking of catechists as agents with expertise in various areas, but primarily as persons who have experienced the love of God and who, for this reason alone, place themselves at the service of the proclamation of the Kingdom. The awareness of his own limitations cannot discourage the catechist from welcoming the call to service; on the contrary, he can respond to it by relying on his living relationship with the Lord and on the desire to live the Christian life with authenticity, generously making available to the community the "five loaves and two fish" (cf. Mk 6: 38) of his personal charisms. "We want to have better training [ . . . ] Our falling short of perfection should be no excuse; on the contrary, mission is a constant stimulus not to remain mired in mediocrity but to continue growing." (DC 138)*

*Together with fidelity to the message of the faith, the catechist is called to understand human beings in the concrete and in the sociocultural context in which they live. As all Christians do,*

*even more so should catechists “live in very close union with the other men of their time and may they strive to understand perfectly their way of thinking and judging, as expressed in their culture” (GS 62). (DC 146)*

*The catechist carries out this educational process not as an individual, but together with the community and in its name. (DC 150)*

## At-Church Community

All of our resources have an at-church component even if the majority of the catechesis is happening in the home. Community is essential in the life of the Church and we desire for families to gather often to support one another. The premier weekly gathering is Sunday Mass. It is our prayer that as families fall in love with Jesus and their community that they would hunger to live in a weekly communion available to them at the Mass. We also suggest different implementation options and community events in the Tips section of our Leader Guides.

*The liturgy is “the privileged place for catechizing the People of God.” (DC 46)*

*The Christian community is the primary agent of catechesis. For this reason, catechetical pedagogy must make every effort to convey the importance of the community as a fundamental space for personal growth. (DC 218)*

## Family Realities

It is important that our faith formation programs take a realistic view of current family structures in order to accompany families in an adequate way. We must seek to reach out to all families on their faith journeys. This includes single parent homes, divorced homes, homes where faith is passed on by grandparents or other family members, etc.

*With concern, respect, and pastoral solicitude the Church wants to accompany those children who are marked by a wounded love, who find themselves in the most fragile condition, restoring their trust and hope. “Following this divine pedagogy, the Church turns with love to those who participate in her life in an imperfect manner: she seeks the grace of conversion for them; she encourages them to do good, to take loving care of each other and to serve the community in which they live and work.” It is important that every Christian community take a realistic view of the heterogeneous family realities, with their ups and downs, for the sake of accompanying them in an adequate way and discerning the complexity of the situations, without giving in to forms of idealism and pessimism. In essence “It is a matter of reaching out to everyone, of needing to help each person find his or her proper way of participating in the*

*ecclesial community and thus to experience being touched by an 'unmerited, unconditional and gratuitous' mercy." (DC 234)*

*Accompanying in the faith and introducing into community life the situations referred to as irregular therefore "entails taking seriously each person and God's plan for his or her life" with a style of togetherness, listening and understanding. In addition to personal spiritual accompaniment, catechists should find ways and means to foster the participation of these brothers in catechesis as well, in specific groups made up of persons who share the same conjugal or family experience or in other pre-existing groups of families or adults. In this way it is possible to avoid forms of solitude or discrimination and to reawaken the desire to accept and respond to the love of God. (DC 235)*

*It is likewise important to consider that there are many children and teenagers who are deeply affected by the fragility of the bonds within their families, even though they are in situations of financial prosperity; others instead still live today in environmental conditions strongly marked by poverty, by violence, by instability. These children, who for different reasons suffer from the lack of sure points of reference for life, often have less of a chance to know and love God as well. The ecclesial community should dialogue with the parents if possible, supporting them in their educational task; it should also make itself present and available to offer motherly concern and practical consideration at all times: this will be a primary and fundamental proclamation of God's providential goodness. (DC 238)*

*The role of deacons in catechesis is particularly valuable in certain areas, specifically the life of charity and of the family. Their action can be carried out among prisoners, the sick, the elderly, at-risk youth, immigrants, etc. Deacons have the task of encouraging those who in these ways experience poverty to avail themselves of the catechetical activity of the ecclesial community so as to encourage all believers toward a true education in charity. Moreover, permanent deacons who live in the married state are called in a particular way on account of their unique way of life to be credible witnesses to the beauty of this sacrament. They, with the help of their wives and of their children (if they have any) can engage in the catechesis of families and in the accompaniment of all those situations that require particular attention and sensitivity. (DC 118)*

*In addition to the parents, it is the grandparents, above all in certain cultures, who carry out a special role in the transmission of the faith to the very young. Scripture as well presents the faith of grandparents as a witness for their grandchildren (cf. 2 Tm 1: 5). "The Church has always paid special attention to grandparents, recognizing them as a great treasure from both the human and social, as well as religious and spiritual viewpoints." In the face of family crisis, grandparents, who are often more deeply rooted in the Christian faith and have a past rich with experience, become important points of reference. Often, in fact, many people owe their initiation into the Christian life precisely to their grandparents. The contribution of grandparents turns out to be important in catechesis on account of both the greater amount of time they are able to dedicate and their capacity to encourage younger generations with their characteristic affection. The prayer of petition and song of praise from grandparents sustains the community in the work and struggles of life. (DC 126)*



# Family Follow Throughs

We believe accountability is important. We have a few different tracking and accountability options:

- Martha: Our online learning management platform includes a “Family Follow Through” prompt at the end of each family meeting that asks families to submit a photo, text response, or audio response.
- PDF: A pdf is available with these same “Family Follow Throughs” that you can email to families asking them to directly email you their photo or text response after each family meeting they complete.

## A Few Tips

- Pathways is a whole family formation suite designed to move a family through a series of steps bringing them into a life of active faith. A family with multiple children may only need to journey through the progressive formation once, while revisiting the immediate preparation that has a specific family member as the focus. We encourage the entire family to participate in family meetings as each person brings a special perspective and presence. While each family is different, we do not recommend they participate in more than two of our programs at a given time. The interview process will better help you assess the needs and abilities of a family and tailor a path that is best for them.
- All of our boxes come with enough supplies for a family of 7 for the activities that involve everyone. There are activities that are directed toward a certain family member in the sacramental preparation programs. If there are two or more siblings going through sacramental preparation in the same year, we recommend getting an Extra Child Pack for them so they can have their own supplies for those activities. They are available for a nominal cost. You do not need to get multiple boxes of the same program for a family.
- All our programs are designed to fit together as a cohesive whole, but can also be used individually.
- We hope our resources can help you move to a model of formation that can have different start times based on a family's readiness.

# RESOURCES



# Implementation Paths

You can discover some proposed paths by visiting our website:

<https://www.fflcm.org/implementationpaths>

## FAQs

You can read some of our frequently asked questions by visiting our website:

<https://www.fflcm.org/faqs>

## Additional Helpful Language

- We would like to focus more on faith being shared in your own homes, rather than only providing a classroom setting for your child to learn.
- Statistics show that for faith to “stick” it must be talked about and lived out with the people children love the most, their parents. We may only have them in the classroom for one or two years, but you will be in a relationship with them for a lifetime.
- We determined that you are our best investment for the faith development of your children. We sought out a program that puts family at the center of the teaching. We know parents are already overwhelmed, especially in this current reality, so we did not want to just send home one more thing to “do.” We wanted to give you a tool to create meaningful moments together that will help you develop Christian leaders. We all want to raise children that embody the values of Jesus. Children who are courageous, kind, humble, compassionate, and have strong characters.
- Most of the programs we are choosing to bring to you are conducted in your own homes with you as the leader. Everything you need is provided in the form of a box, or online program. It is interactive and very easy to implement. The material is presented through short family meetings and you get to choose the best day and time for these to happen.
- Parents, you have everything needed to share faith with your children! Your own life and the ways you have encountered God is your best teaching tool. Faith is meant to be a gift, a lens to see your life through, not a series of classes to “check off.” It is meant to be relevant to your everyday life. We hope you will experience this program as such. We look forward to your feedback, and will use it to guide us

in this new process.

- Your family remains in our prayers as an essential part of our community!