

## Best Practices

For many of the parents, this will be the first time they have reconnected with the Church since their child's Baptism. Providing a sense of welcome and making an effort to help families feel comfortable is key. On these pages are some practices that can help to accomplish this.

## Creating the Environment

- Make sure to create a prayer space where the Bible and the signs and symbols of the session are clearly visible.
- It is important that the screen used to display the PowerPoint® questions is big enough for everyone to read. You will also need the screen to show the videos suggested in the sessions. Check in advance that the technology is working properly. A small TV that is difficult to hear in a large room may well suggest that what you are watching is not that important.
- As you assign seating, try to seat engaged parents near parents that are not as engaged. You may want to send an "evangelization guide" to the engaged parents beforehand that provides suggestions about how to enter into conversations with others. Equip them to share about the meaning of faith and parish life in their own family in an informal and conversational way.
- Make sure the materials necessary for each session are gathered and easy to access in the manner suggested in the session plans.
- If you have the courage, invite parents to put their cell phones in a "parking lot" (a door-hanging shoe holder will work great). Letter the pockets and have parents remember the letter to reclaim their phone. Approach it as a game and declare a no judgement zone for the parents who just can't do it. But ask that no one use their phones, except during breaks.
- Gather a team of parishioners and ask them to help personally welcome parents and help them register, get refreshments, and find their seats. These people would walk with the parents to the different places and perhaps sit with them a while and chat before the session begins. During registration, give children color-coded name tags. When you call a color group forward, they are ready to be placed in the care of their catechist.
- As the children are called forward, you may want to introduce the catechists by providing a little information about each one.

## During the Session

- Pay attention for signs that it is time for a stretch break that you may not have planned on. When you serve refreshments, pre-pour beverages to make things move more quickly. Also, perhaps your hospitality committee could create baskets for each table with some cookies, fruit, and nutrition bars.
- Always have bulletins available wherever participants are seated. Refer to parish events whenever there is an opportunity to connect an event to the session outcomes.

When leading the practice of scripture reflection, you may want to create more specific questions for the parents since it will probably be the first time many have done this type of prayer. Possible examples: What thought or image did you have during prayer? Was it difficult to settle and be still? Keep in mind that sharing with a large group can be intimidating. Provide encouragement and support to all participants.