

Parent Orientation

Leader Directions for Alternate Model

These directions will guide you through an alternate to the videos used in The Unique Role of Parents and Family Resources sections in the Director Guide pages 41-42.

Before the Gathering

At the end of this file, you will find an article, “The Sacred Ground of Family Life.” This replaces the video noted in the Unique Role of the Parents section.

The article is divided into 5 pages, labeled as Groups. When you gather, divide your parents into 5 groups. Make enough copies of each Group page for the number of parents you will have in each group.

In the Family Resources section of the orientation, you will be walking parents through the Family + Faith Resource for the first session your catechists will be teaching.

At the Gathering

Arrange your parents into 5 groups for reading and discussion.

Follow instructions for Welcome and Opening Prayer (Director Guide pages 39-40).

Unique Role of Parents

Follow instructions for Unique Role of Parents on page 40 and through the top of page 41. Instead of the script starting with “Let’s watch....” and the video with reflection questions in the middle of page 14, use the following script and process.

Say: During our time together, we want to help you gain a deeper understanding of the invaluable role you have in helping your child grow in faith. Let’s spend some time reflecting on and discussing this role.

Give each group one of the numbered pages for “The Sacred Ground of Family Life.” Instruct the groups to:

- Read the section of the article they receive.
- Discuss using the reflection questions on the page.
- Summarize their reading and discussion for one representative to share with the larger group.

Parent Orientation

Leader Directions for Alternate Model

Page 2

Note: The PowerPoint® includes slides for this process.

Give the small groups about 7 minutes for reading and discussion.

Do everything you can to make the adults comfortable about sharing. Walk through the groups and encourage their participation.

Start with Group 1 and have each small group share insights with the larger group. After all groups have shared, move to the next topic.

Family Resources

Return to the Director Guide. Follow the script for Family Resources on Page 41 up to the video reference.

Say: Now I am going to guide you through the Family + Faith Resource.

Your child's catechist will teach the content of the lessons and help your child develop an openness of heart to receive the grace of the sacraments. It is essential to recall, however, that you are the primary teacher of faith in your family.

Together you, the catechist, and our parish are a team. Together you will feed the spark of faith that God implanted in your daughter or son. Make every effort to get to know your child's catechist!

To equip, support, and inspire you in your role, we are providing the Family+ Faith Resource. Today you have available the one for the first session. Please resist the temptation to look ahead and walk with me through this invaluable tool for your family.

Distribute Family + Faith pages to each family.

Note: The PowerPoint® slides highlight key features of each page of the Family + Faith Resource.

Direct the parents' attention to the front page. Share the following information about the three feature on this page.

- The first is a prayer that is always a good way to begin anything we do.

Parent Orientation

Leader Directions for Alternate Model

Page 3

- The second is the article Stop, Ponder and Wonder. The short reflection offers the opportunity to stop for a moment and consider family life in light of faith. As it connects family life to our Catholic faith, the hope is it will make you ponder, to think about something in your faith or family life in a new light.

Allowing those thoughts to awaken in you a sense of wonder and awe about God and his Church will give God what he needs to help you move into deeper relationship with him.

- The third, Catholic Signs and Symbols, focuses on sacred objects, gestures and prayers we use in the Sacraments.

Have the parent open the Resource. Share the following information about various elements they will find inside, starting with the left page.

- As Your Child Understands offers good sense of how children understand and process the content they are learning at this age of development. Of course, at this age no child is capable of conceptually understanding the fullness of truth that we confess as Catholics. Yet a child is capable of understanding basic beliefs that will grow as she or he grows.
- Our Family Life offers an activity that is connected to the core content of the lesson with suggestions for discussion.
- The Catholic Faith Words box provides key words the children have learned this session.
- Finally, on this page and the next are Consider This boxes. The boxes offer some thoughts about family, Church teaching, and your spirituality, your relationship with God in Christ.

Direct their attention to the opposite page. Point out the following features.

- The Meet Jesus feature follows what is in the Child's Book. In each session, children will meet Jesus through one of the titles or images of Christ we find in Scripture or in the Sacred Tradition of the Church. Reviewing this section with your child will reinforce the journey of coming to know Jesus more deeply.

Leader Directions for Alternate Model

Page 4

- Sharing Faith in Our Family offers conversation starters for those important talks we need to have with our children and suggests a simple activity to be done together.
- At the bottom of the page is help in celebrating the Sacrament. The Reconciliation sessions explore the Prayer of Absolution offered by the priest. The Eucharist sessions walk through the Order of the Mass, paying particular attention to the responses that the assembly speaks. Knowing and understanding these parts of the rite will make you more comfortable as you celebrate them.

Have the group turn to the back page, entitled My Family *in* Our Parish. Explain that It is designed to help their families feel more comfortable in your parish Church and to help focus their children's attention and deepen understanding.

Say: You will need to read this page before you go to Mass each Sunday. The activities on the page are never meant to do during Mass (with one exception). Mass requires open hearts and that relies of our full attention and participation. Some activities are meant to do after Mass, some before but the directions are clear. One of the most important parts of this page is the box, Disciples Sharing.... In this box you will find questions that will help you to begin a dialogue with your child about our faith the sacraments, and the Mass.

Many of you may be thinking when will we find the time for this? First of all, you can do this in pieces. Each section is self-contained. You may want to keep this resource in the car so that you can read while you are waiting for a practice to be over. Or take two minutes to read before you go to the gym or take a walk around your block. It can be done.

God willed your child into being and gave that precious baby to you so that you could return a disciple to him. Your parish is passionate about walking with your family on this miraculous journey. And God is waiting to enfold all of us and each of us in the gift of the sacraments.

Return to page 42 in the Director Guide, skipping the video discussion reference on the top of this page.

Follow the Director Guide for the rest of the orientation.

Parent Orientation

The Sacred Ground of Family Life

Group 1

A father holding his first born daughter opened the door of his home and saw the face of his sister. With tears in his eyes, he looked across the newborn's tiny face and said, "I never knew I could love like this." Do you remember that moment in your own lives? The first time you held your child in your arms, it taught you more about yourself than you ever knew.

Did you ever wonder where that love came from? The love that poured out of you did not begin in you. It began, in fact, in the inner being of God who is love. God is not just a sometime visitor in your family. God is the love that makes you family. Your family is the love of God made visible in the world.

This understanding of family is far beyond a definition of family as the smallest unit in society. Our families, whatever form yours may be at the moment, are the sacred place where God first gathers us and forms us. It is from this community of love that he first sends us out into the world to be his disciples.

Discuss Reflection Questions

- What did you read that affirmed you?
- What did you read that challenged you?
- What gave you new insight or understanding?

Summarize Key Points and Prepare to Share with Large Group

Parent Orientation

The Sacred Ground of Family Life

Group 2

God created in our human nature a longing for relationship. That longing to be loved and to love find its first home in your home! Infants and toddlers cannot get enough love. You might call them love sponges—they soak up every bit they can get and go looking for more. As they grow, the desire to love another awakens in them. Whose heart does not melt when a child hands you a dandelion and says, “I love you?” So, we are gathered, and then we are formed.

Every parent, out of love, wants desperately for their child to develop into a responsible, successful, well-mannered human being. If you counted up the hours you have spent in caring for their physical needs, their intellectual development, the pursuit of their talents, and their emotional wellbeing...well maybe it would be easier to count the hours you weren't focusing on all those things. From the moment of their conception, you begin the journey of forming them.

Discuss Reflection Questions

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Summarize Key Points and Prepare to Share with Large Group

Parent Orientation

The Sacred Ground of Family Life

Group 3

Because no parent loves perfectly, we must admit that we also may unintentionally harm our children's development. For instance, a constant urging for a child to win in academic or athletic competitions may cause her or him to be a poor loser, or to question her or his value if first place doesn't happen. Helping your child to become a mature adult is sacred work. As Catholic parents, however, there is another layer to that work, one that permeates everything.

You made the decision to bring your child to be baptized. In the preparation for the Sacrament and during the rite itself, you were asked what you wanted for your child. The answer was not to be a responsible, successful, well-mannered human being. The answer you gave was faith. You declared before the community present that what you wanted more than anything for your child was a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. In fact, you promised to God, the Church, and your family and friends gathered that you would form your child as a disciple of Christ. The Church promised to support you in kindling that spark of faith in your child.

Discuss Reflection Questions

- What did you read that affirmed you?
- What did you read that challenged you?
- What gave you new insight or understanding?

Summarize Key Points and Prepare to Share with Large Group

Parent Orientation

The Sacred Ground of Family Life

Group 4

In one of the documents of the Church that speaks about forming people in faith, we hear that the “childhood religious awakening that takes place in the family is irreplaceable.” The Church recognizes that you are the most powerful person in your child’s life in claiming his or her true identity as a child of the Father, a brother or sister of Christ, and a temple of the Holy Spirit. Being a Catholic parent is a call from God, it is a vocation.

In the busyness of your day, in the list of things that have to get done, in the need to take care of your family’s basic needs, it may be hard to remember that. The call to holiness is not just for priests, religious sisters and brothers, and those who work for the Church.

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Yet, there is more to forming disciples than loving them. The family is the place where faith is taught, celebrated, and lived. We must be intentional and purposeful about helping our children to grow as disciples. That means that prayer must be a central part of our family. Praying grace before we eat, even in the car, saying night and morning prayers, praying the rosary, or saying prayers that spontaneously come from our hearts is the life blood of a Catholic family.

Discuss Reflection Questions

- What did you read that affirmed you?
- What did you read that challenged you?
- What gave you new insight or understanding?

Summarize Key Points and Prepare to Share with Large Group

Parent Orientation

The Sacred Ground of Family Life

Group 5

When Christ is the center of our family, we must be determined to develop servant hearts in our children, hearts that understand that each person's dignity is a gift from God, and hands that discover ways to work for justice. Looking for opportunities to live the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy should be as much of a priority as practices for dance or sports. That doesn't necessarily mean looking for a soup kitchen to volunteer. It could be as simple as becoming aware of the needs of an elderly neighbor and offering to rake leaves or pick up groceries

Critically important is full participation in the Sacraments. It is in those encounters with God, the most intimate encounters we will have in this world of God's presence, we can grow most deeply in relationship with him. Sunday Mass becomes for us a life sustaining connection that offers us communion with God and with each other.

For, as a Catholic parent what you want for your child is simply this—when they stand at the door of eternal life, she or he will look at the face of God and say, “I never knew I could love like this.”

Discuss Reflection Questions

- What did you read that affirmed you?
- What did you read that challenged you?
- What gave you new insight or understanding?

Summarize Key Points and Prepare to Share with Large Group