

Faith Formation for Children & Youth

Parishes offer a variety of models of faith formation:

- **Traditional school model**– Weekly classes by grade level or age groupings: normally in conjunction with the school calendar (September to May). These are scheduled at various times on weekends or weekdays after school or in the evenings. Parishes using this model offer an average of 24 sessions per year. Children’s catechetical are a minimum of one hour per session. Youth sessions may be 1 to 2 hours and 15 to 20 sessions per year.
- **Family-centered model**– Monthly or bi-monthly sessions for children and their parent(s) at the same time, usually a minimum of 1 to 2 hours. Children and parents may be learning together for the whole time or may meet in age groups for part of the time. These sessions include prayer, community building, and other interactive learning
- **Lifelong, Intergenerational models** – Based on the premise that faith formation is lifelong, this model includes all households in the parish, not solely children and parents. Usually scheduled monthly or seasonally around the liturgical year, sessions meet a minimum of 2-3 hours, often including a meal. Gatherings include intergenerational prayer and sharing. Sometimes the learning segments are done intergenerationally and other times in groupings (children with families, teens, adults). The curriculum is a six year process, spiraling every six years, and includes the major content areas of faith: Creed, Sacraments, Prayer, the Liturgical Year, Morality, Justice and Service. Another aspect of this model is that learning is extended into the household. Parishes who use this as their primary method of faith formation offer 8-10 months of gatherings (often repeated to accommodate larger numbers and to offer scheduling options). Other parishes choose to “blend” a traditional weekly program for children and youth with the intergenerational models. These parishes may offer 3-6 intergenerational gatherings and reduce the number of weekly traditional sessions to accommodate this blended model.
- **Sacramental Preparation** – Sacramental catechesis prepares children and youth and their families, adults and ideally the whole parish assembly to celebrate a sacrament meaningfully and enter the sacramental life. Programs for Infant Baptism, Christian Initiation (RCIA adapted for children), First Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation are offered for children, youth and their families. Guided by diocesan policies and guidelines, parishes offer sacramental preparation in a variety of models.
- **Youth Ministry models** – There are 8 components of comprehensive youth ministry: advocacy, catechesis, community life, evangelization, justice and service, leadership development, pastoral care, prayer and worship. Parishes work with a variety of models for catechesis – traditional weekly or monthly, modules of core courses and electives, intergenerational. Retreats, prayer and liturgy, and deeper faith sharing experiences are offered. Justice and service are key elements. Parishes seek to build community with youth and to integrate them fully into the life of the community.
- **Vacation Bible School and other summer programs** – This model offered as a parish or cluster or as an ecumenical experience provides children and younger adolescents with a concentrated catechetical experience of scripture, story telling, crafts, prayer and creative activities in a week or multiple week process. Younger and older adolescents often participate as catechists or assistants.