

To: Parents of St. Augustine Catholic Church
From: DRE – Family Faith Formation Program
Date: 8/8/2021
Subject: Family Faith Formation 2021 – 2022



St. Augustine
CATHOLIC CHURCH
Our heart is restless until it rests in you Lord.

Dear Parents:

Undoubtedly, the health emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect much of our lives in one way or another. As much as we would have liked to conduct this year's Family Faith Formation Program in a more traditional form, it seems that we must still exercise caution. We see that the dominant strain of the virus is much nastier today than last year, and even though the vaccination efforts have mitigated its negatives effects, it is the young and children who are bearing much of the front today.

After much prayerful discernment, we have decided to repeat the Parent-led family catechesis concept of the Family of Faith of the Sophia Institute this year for all the classes except for the Confirmation candidates. Midterm, we will reevaluate and see whether we could safely come together again, but for now, we think this is the prudent thing to do.

The Family of Faith program allows parents and their children (all age ranges) to learn together at home using accessible turnkey material with Father Godfred and DRE's support. Instead of asking parents to teach grade-specific content for each child in the family, this model is designed to offer a single-family session of about 30 minutes. This program meets our needs on multiple levels: it is an outstanding Catholic program, can be used flexibly, is affordable, as well as user friendly. This program doesn't require parents to be experts in the Faith or catechesis. Neither does it require parents to teach different lessons for each age group.

Instead, this program helps families learn and live the faith together and empowers parents to be the primary faith educators to their children, which has always been the best form of catechesis. Each family within our parish community will be learning together, and we will be in solidarity with one another. Last year's theme focused on Salvation History. This year's catechetical theme, among other aspects of the faith, will focus on all the Sacraments.

We will have two virtual Zoom meeting sessions per month with the families. The first session will introduce and explain the material for the month; the second session will be a recap of the lesson and the sharing of the experiences with the rest of the virtual community. The sessions will be in English and Spanish on different days. Plans are underway to coordinate a kick-off session for parents and a family "drive-thru" to pick up the materials.

If you would like to see more about "Family of Faith" go to:
<https://sophiainstituteforteachers.org/shop/family-of-faith>

In addition to the above, we will further focus on the families needing the sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation. These sessions' materials and instructions will be announced in the upcoming weeks and conducted via Zoom or in-person as required.

The cost for the program is \$35.00 per family. It covers one Parent's Guidebook and one Children Activity Workbook. This will be the same cost for the First Communion, and first year of formation Confirmation Candidates. The fee is due before picking up of materials.

Registration forms will be available in the narthex of the Church.

You can also download the form from the parish website (staugustinethomasville.weebly.com) and the parish's Facebook page. Would you please email the registration form to familyfaithformationsa@gmail.com? Please make sure your child's baptismal records are duly noted (date (mm/dd/yyyy) and parish (name/address)) on the form.

Feel free to call your DRE team should you have any questions or communicate with us through email at (familyfaithformationsa@gmail.com).

Our prayers with yours,

Your DRE team:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Miguel and Andrea Gutierrez, and Father Godfred". The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Miguel and Andrea Gutierrez, and Father Godfred

(352) 553 7811

(229) 379 6495

(229) 226 3624

Content Overview

The Parent's Guide

- Background essays covering each month's content
- Notes for conveying this content to children in age-appropriate ways
- Instructions for activities and craft projects
- Stories of the saints and other notable Catholics
- Suggestions for living the faith at home, such as...
 - Guidance for creating and decorating a prayer space
 - Prayers for special occasions
 - Tips for talking about tough subjects
 - Ways to bring the liturgical year to life in the home



The Children's Activity Book

The Children's Activity Book is designed to help children come to know the Catholic Faith through fun games and activities. The Parent's Guide offers talking points for how to use each activity in the children's book as a teachable moment, leading the child to a deeper relationship with Christ.

Activities in the Children's Activity Book include...

- Age-appropriate readings and activities
- Scripture memorization and copy work
- Prayer memorization
- Saints biographies
- Games and crafts
- Drawings and coloring pages
- Journal pages
- Prompts for original prayers and reflections
- Student Family of Faith materials



The Leader's Guide

The leader's guide allows the parish catechetical leader to make the most of each meeting with families. The leader's guide includes:

- Start-up guide for organizing and leading the program
- Trivia games and other ice breakers for adult meetings
- Lecture notes and PowerPoint slides
- Detailed plans with games and activities for community meetings
- Instructions for integrating *A Family of Faith* into the life of the parish
- Suggestions for ensuring accountability



November

OVERVIEW

EXPLORING THE PROFESSION OF FAITH



VERSE OF THE MONTH

GENESIS 1:27

God created mankind in His image; in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.

SAINT OF THE MONTH

OLD TESTAMENT PATRIARCHS

LESSON 3

MADE IN HIS IMAGE, BUT FALLEN FROM GRACE

Overview

Your children will begin to learn what it means to be made in the image and likeness of God. We also begin to see the story of creation unfold: the Original Sin of Adam and Eve lost for them and all humanity the friendship and harmony they shared with God, each other, and all of creation. But although man offended God, God's mercy never faded. He promised a Redeemer and entered into covenants with mankind.

Catechism Articles to Read

- › 54-73
- › 287-289
- › 343
- › 355-356
- › 374-379

Words to Know

- › Immortal Soul
- › Original Holiness
- › Original Justice
- › Grace
- › Original Sin
- › Beatific Vision
- › Salvation History
- › Covenant
- › Advent
- › Prophet

Please choose from the activities for the month.

It is not necessary to complete every activity. We offer a wealth of activities to choose from because each child learns differently, so select the activities that best suit the learning needs of your family. Feel free to shorten or improvise on each activity as necessary. You know best what your family needs!



Age Level: Ages 5-8
Recommended time: 15 minutes
What you will need: A hand mirror

What you need to know before you begin:

Human beings have a unique place in creation. When God created human beings, He said that His creation was very good. The Catechism teaches that man is the "summit" of the Creator's work. Man is "the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake, and he alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God's own life" (CCC 356).

"God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27). We are created in the image of God, but what does that mean? It does not mean that we look like Him. Rather, it means that human persons are created with intellect, free will, and the capacity to love. This means that we can:

- > use our reason to know things
- > choose between right and wrong
- > love God and one another

These gifts that we have received from God allow us to enter into communion with other persons and, by grace, to enter into a relationship with God Himself. Of all the creatures on earth, only man can share in the divine life of God. This capacity is why we say that man is created in the image and likeness of God.

Activity

- A. Begin by asking your children, "How are people different from all the other things God created?" Have a family discussion about all the ways that we can see that human beings are different than the rest of creation. For example: people can talk, ask questions, build skyscrapers, explore the universe, and do other things that plants and animals cannot do.
- B. Hold a hand mirror in front of each child and have him or her make a silly face. Explain that what they see is their reflection. This reflection is called an image. Now turn your back to the child(ren), placing the mirror in such a way that they can see you in the mirror. Make different expressions (have fun!) and have the children tell you what they are doing.
- C. Let this lead into a discussion covering the following points:
 - > Our image in the mirror tells something about us.
 - > As images of God, we teach others about God and how He loves us.
 - > Since we are created in His image, we should try to be like God. When we choose to act like God, we are like mirrors – we reflect God.
- D. With your older children, discuss with them what you read about what it means to be made in the image of God: that we are created with intellect, free will, and the capacity to love.



Connection to the Catechism

"God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them. Man occupies a unique place in creation: he is "in the image of God"... (CCC 355)

Scripture Reading

Read aloud to your children the story of the Fall from grace of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. When you finish the reading, explain that we call this first sin of Adam and Eve Original Sin. Share with your children anything you learned in the information above that you think is appropriate for their age(s).

Activity for Children Ages 5-8

To help your younger children understand the consequences of Original Sin, have them draw a sad face on one side of a paper plate, and a happy face on the other side. Ask them to flip the plate over as you ask them how Adam and Eve would have felt after each of the following events before and after Original Sin. For younger children, it is important to emphasize that sin makes us unhappy, and obedience makes us happy.

- > When Adam first saw Eve. *Happy.*
- > When they would walk with God in the garden. *Happy.*
- > When they were safe with all the animals. *Happy.*
- > When there was no sickness or death. *Happy.*
- > When they disobeyed God. *Sad.*
- > When they were banished from the Garden of Eden. *Sad.*

Activity for Children Ages 8 and Up

Work with your older children to fill-in-the-blanks on the **Original Holiness & Justice and the Fall** (page 49 in the children's activity book). Answers to the activity are as follows:

- | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Image, Likeness | 5. Reason, choose freely, and love | 8. Beatific Vision |
| 2. Soul | 6. Spiritual, material | 9. Original Sin |
| 3. Holiness, Justice | 7. Grace | 10. Love |
| 4. Immortal | | |



Connection to the Catechism

Revelation makes known to us the state of original holiness and justice of man and woman before sin: from their friendship with God flowed the happiness of their existence in paradise. (CCC 384)



Age Level: All ages
Recommended time: 5 minutes

What you need to know before you begin:

The story of the Christian Faith is a love story, and the main characters are God and His people. Like any epic love story, the story of our Faith is filled with discovery, generosity, tenderness, intimacy, drama, pain, guilt, mercy, and forgiveness. But unlike any other story of love, God, the pursuer, is unfailingly faithful to His beloved, His Chosen People, us, despite His beloved's persistent unfaithfulness.

We encounter this love story first and foremost in Scripture. The Bible is the written record of the story of our salvation. We call this salvation history because God made Himself known in specific ways, to prepare His people for the gift of salvation.

God chose for Himself a people to whom He would reveal His plan for salvation. These people – the Israelites (the Jews) – were the ones through whom the Savior would come.

Discussion

- A. Ask your children: "Adam and Eve sinned when they chose themselves over God. But God continued to love them. How can we tell that God never stopped loving them?" Ask older children to write their answer(s) on a separate sheet of paper before you continue.
- B. Have a family discussion about all the ways we see God continue to love Adam and Eve even right after they disobey Him. For example:

Frequently Asked Questions

Does *A Family of Faith* replace faith formation or religious education classes?

It can, but doesn't have to. Some parishes offer *A Family of Faith* as an alternative to traditional faith formation classes, and some use it in place of these classes. Parents are also free to purchase and use the program on their own.

What if the parent doesn't know the Faith well, or know how to teach?

A Family of Faith is completely turn-key for the parents, giving them the easy-to-understand content and step-by-step instructions for each activity, helping them to gain knowledge of the Faith and confidence as they teach it. Various tools are also available to help parents turn potentially problematic situations into successes, such as what to do when a child asks a question you do not know.

Shouldn't the religious education of children be left to the parish?

Since the current faith formation and religious education model is struggling to transform family life, and since many young people who go through faith formation are leaving the faith, we are proposing a new model (which is actually an ancient model) where the parish focuses on catechizing the parents in order to strengthen parent/child engagement in the Faith. This increases the likelihood that a child will receive an authentic education in the Faith and develop into a knowledgeable and practicing Catholic. Countless studies have shown that parental engagement with the child is the single most effective way to develop young people into disciples of Christ.

But what if parents don't want to be bothered and remove their child from religious instruction altogether? Wouldn't we be better off just maintaining the status quo?

This did not prove to be the case in the pilot tests we conducted among nine parishes nationwide. While it is true that some parents will likely decide to offer no instruction than to participate in this program, the vast majority of families are finding *A Family of Faith* to be far more flexible, enabling them to transform the family activities they already do into encounters with God. Parents are able to enter into those “teachable moments” of everyday life. *A Family of Faith* leads parents into a conversion to Jesus Christ, which is beneficial to the parish, but most of all to the children they are raising.

Is there a lot of work involved for families? How much time will this program take?

No. There are two lessons to teach each month, along with a variety of family and child activities. Each lesson should take no more than 30-45 minutes to complete, and requires minimal preparation on the part of the parent. For the parish catechists, our leader's guide provides them with ice breakers, presentation notes, discussion questions and answers, and step-by-step instructions for activities, freeing the catechist from the burden of developing all of this on his or her own.

For what age children has this program been developed?

Because this program focuses on teaching the faith to parents and helping them make it an organic part of family life, it is perfect for parents with children of all ages. For example, a monthly feature called “Your Catholic Home” gives specific advice for ways to make the Faith a regular part of each day. The Children’s Activity Books are recommended for children in grades K-8, and features engaging activities at various grade levels. Parents can skip the activities they believe are too elementary or too advanced for their child.

Does my child have to be a strong reader?

No. Although readings and written activities are offered, the Children’s Activity Book and Parent's Guide offer a wide variety of activities using numerous strategies to impart and assess knowledge that do not rely on reading or writing.

How many meetings are required per month?

The program provides everything you need for two meetings per month: one 90-minute session early in the month with parents only, and a second 90-minute community meeting after Sunday Mass near the end of the month. The 90-minute session catechizes parents and helps them to deepen their knowledge of the Faith. Entire families attend the 90-minute community meeting, which is meant to help ensure accountability and build community through games and other family activities.

What tools does the program offer to ensure accountability?

The program offers several options, along with a planning worksheet for parish teams to determine how they will build in accountability. For example: Families are given a year-long project that they will add to each month; catechists may require parents to bring these projects in occasionally to check progress. Each community meeting begins with a question and answer session with children, which gives the catechist a chance to assess the knowledge of individual children. Finally, the last session of each year features a fun and interactive game with dozens of questions covering content from the whole year. This game could be used as a final written assessment if desired.

How does the program handle sacramental preparation?

A Family of Faith does not treat the Sacraments as isolated events and is not designed to serve as preparation for receiving the Sacraments. Students grow in their spiritual journey through regular activities with their parents, prayer, Mass attendance, and participation in parish life. Because this program moves away from grade-based cohorts and focuses on transmitting the faith as a whole, preparation to receive the Sacraments occurs as the child naturally matures and shows evidence of understanding. Each child’s readiness to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation should be assessed on an individual basis. If a parish has a sacramental preparation program assessment, it may be offered in addition to the content presented in *A Family of Faith*.

How will I know my children are learning?

You will undoubtedly see your children learn as they memorize Scripture verses and are able to define key words of our Catholic Faith. Children will demonstrate in conversations their understanding of concepts of the Faith, and you'll see them begin to live their Faith through service projects, an enriched prayer life, and a deepening relationship with Jesus Christ. The child's desire to know, love, and serve Jesus is proof that they are learning and becoming a disciple of Christ.

Does the program offer help for getting families involved?

Yes. We offer tools for planning, tips for developing an "elevator pitch" and getting the word out, strategies for recruiting and retaining families, a sample bulletin announcement, and much more.

Family Faith Formation Catechesis Registration - 2020/2021 Academic Year

St. Augustine – Thomasville, GA and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton – Cairo, GA

Child's First _____ Middle _____ Last _____

Gender: _____ Birth date ____/____/____ Age: _____ Shirt Size: _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____ Phone _____

Current Secular school of attendance: _____ Grade: _____

How many <i>full years</i> of Religious Education has this child completed?				
Child's birthplace: Town:		State:		Country:
SACRAMENTS	Yes <i>or</i> No	Date	Church Name and Address	Certificate on File?
Has this child been <u>Baptized?</u>			Name of Church: Address Of Church:	
Has this child made their <u>First Reconciliation?</u>			Name of Church: Address Of Church:	
Has this child made their <u>First Communion?</u>			Name of Church: Address Of Church:	

Conduct Release – Considering the online facilitation of this year's catechetical program, St. Augustine Catholic Church is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy virtual learning environment for all participants. It is expected that each participant of the program choose behaviors that contribute toward this end. Children, parents and facilitators are expected to be good citizens and to engage in responsible behaviors that reflect well upon their Catholic identity and parish community, to be civil to one another and to others in their virtual community, and contribute positively to the learning experience. No recordings or media duplication of the virtual sessions will be used for identity disclosure.

Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Family Faith Formation Catechesis Registration - 2020/2021 Academic Year

St. Augustine – Thomasville, GA and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton – Cairo, GA

The following are the legal guardians of the above minor child(ren). Legal guardians listed here have the legal right to make decisions regarding the educational, and spiritual formation of the above listed child(ren). Additionally, parents of children in the K through Confirmation age classes will participate in the Family Catechetical Program concurrent with their child's class and to attend the monthly virtual sessions. Parents/guardians are expected to aid their child(ren) in their instructions and home materials. This is a Family Catechetical Program requiring the entire family to study the beauty of our faith. Welcome to St. Augustine Catholic Church's Family Faith Formation Program!

Mother's Name: First _____ Last _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Email _____

I acknowledge the rules and expectation of the Family Faith Formation Program (Parent Signature):

Father's Name: First _____ Last _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Email _____

I acknowledge the rules and expectation of the Family Faith Formation Program (Parent Signature):
