

Growing Up Catholic

Coaching parents to form their own children in faith



Are We Passing on Our Faith?

Almost every active adult Catholic is active because his or her parents had faith. Their faith did not come from a textbook, no matter how excellent it may have been. It came from the witness, "faith talk," and practices that went on in the home.

However, over the past 50+ years this passing of the faith from generation to generation has slowed or stopped. Parents have come to believe that it is the parish and catechists' job to pass the faith on to children. Many parents don't know their faith well, feel ill equipped to pass it on, and lack confidence.

Partnering with Parents

As statistics clearly show, this model is not working. If the parents are not in the process, the child will not have faith. We must coach the parents to form their own children in order to have formation that lasts a lifetime. By forming their own children, the parents themselves are formed more deeply in their own faith.

We must, therefore, form a real partnership between parish and household. That partnership needs parent-and-child-friendly resources, coaching, and support.

The Role of Parents

Church teaching reinforces the primary role of parents in catechesis using strong words:

- **"Parents have the first responsibility** for the education of their children." (CCC, #2223)
- "The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is **almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute.**" (Vatican II, *Declaration on Christian Education*, #3)
- "The **right and duty** of parents to educate their children is essential... **irreplaceable and inalienable**, and therefore **incapable of being entirely delegated** to others or usurped by others." (John Paul II, *On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*, #36)

Great Expectations

Parents tend to remain absent as long as we agree to form their kids for them. They drop off their kids at class and go shopping.

However, we have found that when parishes clarify what their role really is, empower them to fulfill it, and coach them along the way, they rise to the occasion! Parents *want* to do this, and they *love* doing it once they understand how.

Helping this happen requires a real shift in our expectations and how we structure our faith formation programs. ►

A New Kind of Religious Ed. Event

Making parents the primary catechists is not as easy as sending a textbook home. Parents need help getting started, re-imagining their role, and understanding how to take initiative.

We need a new kind of parish religious education event where:

- **Parents attend** with their children
- Parents are the **teachers**
- **Catechists coach** parents to form their own kids
- **Parents grow** in their own faith

We offer resources designed specifically for this purpose. In this model, families sit together and parents are given clear handouts that guide them in learning and teaching their children *while they are there*. Catechists orchestrate the process, gently coach the parents, and answer questions.



Households of Faith

In partnering with parents, we also need to help them move toward goals in building a household of faith. While passing on doctrinal knowledge is important, fostering loving, faith-filled homes is the key for faith formation lasting a lifetime.

Families need support to learn how to pray together, discover the right Bible and how to use it, how to foster loving responses when life isn't easy. Many even need help reclaiming quality family time, such as the endangered family mealtime. Households of faith produce life-long Catholics.



Resources and Help

Shifting to having great expectations for your parents and coaching them successfully requires planning, insight to overcome pitfalls, and excellent resources. We have built the GrowingUpCatholic.com website to gather all the tools you need to get started. Here is what you can find there:

- **Growing Up Catholic workshop** – Invite us to your diocese, deanery, or leadership event to share our popular presentation.
- **Getting started and planning** – Articles, books, and even a kit for facilitating a kick-off conversation.
- **Learning sessions** – Resources designed for coaching parents at parish gatherings.
- **Take home resources** – A variety of handouts and other resources to be sent home with families.
- **Sacramental preparation** – Our most popular resources coach parents to prepare their whole family for receiving sacraments, from baptism through confirmation.
- **Ongoing support and community** – Join our email list to learn about new resources (including occasional free ones). We're also available to answer your questions by phone or email.

Find all of the above at GrowingUpCatholic.com.

We hope we can help you in your important ministry to families!