



FAMILIES FORMING DISCIPLES

A FAMILY-FOCUSED APPROACH TO FAITH FORMATION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

In what languages is Families Forming Disciples (FFD) offered?

Families Forming Disciples (FFD) is offered in both English and Spanish.

Is there a cost to use Families Forming Disciples?

No, FFD is free.

In what formats are the lessons available?

The FFD lessons are available both in PDF and in Power Point.

The PDFs of weeks 1 and 3 usually serve as a catechist's guide, and the week 2 PDF is a Family Guide. The week 2 PDF explains the Family At-Home Mission Activities and can be printed/sent to families to complete their monthly mission.

Also, the Power Point presentations of weeks 1 and 3 can serve as a presentation tool for the catechists, especially when sharing a screen in a video/remote setting. The catechist can edit the Power Point slides as needed.

What are the best models for utilizing FFD and is the role of the catechist in FFD different from that of a catechist in a traditional PSR classroom?

It depends on how Families Forming Disciples is implemented. For example, FFD is designed to engage the entire family at the same time. This includes parents, all siblings, and any extended family members like grandparents who wish to participate. Children are not separated by grade levels; rather the whole family participates together with the same lesson. In this format, the catechist's role shifts from one who teaches the faith to students at individual grade levels, to one who accompanies families and facilitates learning, faith sharing and prayer within the family. In this format, catechists accompany and teach groups of families.

However, some parishes implement sessions for parents that are separate from their children who are in age-group settings. They use the same materials and adjust the methodology to be age-appropriate for each group. In this format, parents are learning what they will be teaching to their children at home and then return to the parish to share their experiences at the next session.

*Best Practice: Parishes have shared that the best practice is a combination of both approaches, if the parish has the space and resources to do so.

Who is the learner?

FFD is designed so that the entire family is the learner. When the families are learning together, catechists should teach to the average age and ability level of the children who are participating. This will help both to keep children engaged and to model for parents how to share their faith.

*Best Practice: FFD is recommended for elementary age children and their families. While younger and older siblings are welcome to participate, tweens and teens especially should also be engaged in faith formation appropriate for their spiritual development. Parishes have shared that it can be beneficial to offer simultaneously Pre-K and K sessions, as well.

Do parents and catechists need to be experts in Catholic theology to do this program?

Absolutely not! Catechists are responsible for presenting the content materials during the sessions. Parents learn alongside their children, participate in the activities, and share their faith experiences with their families, so that their children can learn from their role modeling.

FFD is written in a clear, concise manner so that it is easy for catechists to understand and share the information. Catechists are asked to do the at-home activities prior to the sessions, so they have the living experience and are truly accompanying the families.

Is there a lot of homework from textbooks that parents are responsible for teaching?

There is no “textbook work” for parents and children to sit and do. Rather, simple and meaningful faith activities are done together as a family, with the goal of bringing family members closer to God and to one another. Learning and memorization are helpful tools that are integrated into the program and many formal prayers are introduced with an emphasis on moving beyond mere memorization to praying so that they become woven into the fabric of daily family life! Living the Catholic faith within their homes, praying and encountering Jesus together are at the center of Families Forming Disciples.

When entire families are gathered, how does the catechist keep everyone engaged?

Multiple activities such as playing games, watching videos, praying, discussing faith, and sharing family stories are weaved throughout the lessons to keep participants of every age engaged, even those with short attention spans. (However, as previously stated, it may be beneficial for parishes to simultaneously offer Pre-K and K sessions, as well.)

FFD focuses on the faith formation of the family as one unit, rather than at specified age levels.

Family Conversations are faith sharing opportunities that pose questions and topics that are both flexible and relevant for all age groups, and they are weaved throughout the lessons.

Video options for both younger children as well as for tweens & teens are embedded within the lessons.

When possible, it is recommended to group together families whose children are closer in age.

Older children in a family often serve as role models for younger members, which helps to keep them engaged.

How to implement Virtual Sessions[AL1]

If the sessions are virtual, the Parent Session at the beginning of Year 1 introduces Guidelines for FFD Etiquette during Virtual Gatherings. At this session parents are asked to discuss these guidelines with their children prior to Lesson 1 to prepare them for participating in the program (they can also review them with their children throughout the year).

In addition, we recommend that catechists themselves serve as an appropriate model by adhering to the Guidelines for FFD Etiquette during Virtual Gatherings.

Review the Guidelines for FFD Etiquette during Virtual Gatherings at the start of Lesson 1, as well as during other times throughout the year, to encourage on-going Christian hospitality.

Guidelines for FFD Etiquette during Virtual Gatherings:

1. Don't expect perfection
2. Put away and/or turn off any distractions
3. Keep pets in another room
4. All family members should be appropriately and modestly dressed
5. Talk to children about the importance of watching for when to listen and when to share
6. Practice good manners with the words we choose, as well as our actions
7. This is a Family Program, therefore children are not to attend a virtual session with any catechist without parent involvement

Can only the children participate in the sessions?

Can only the children participate in the sessions?

This is a Family Program; therefore, children are not permitted to attend a virtual or in-person session[AL2] without parent participation. FFD is not a drop-off program.

How many families per group?

How many families there should be in each grouping depends on the size of the families (as well as the availability of catechists). If the families participating have many children, 5-6 families would be appropriate. Parishes can go up to 10 families per grouping, but we recommend staying within the 5-6 family range. If a parish finds they need to go above 10 families per gathering, then we suggest the focus be on the conversation within the family rather than the large group sharing for the sake of time. Try to keep sessions to an hour at the most.

Are trainings available for catechists and parish leaders using FFD?

If available, training sessions for certain years are recorded and posted on the website.

Are there any safe-environment considerations?

Please see the archdiocesan guidance available at <https://archatl.com/covid-19/safe-environment-guidance-for-online-contact-with-youth/>.

If gathering virtually, what should we do if we have technology difficulties?

Don't panic. Develop a plan for how to respond if technology difficulties arise during your virtual sessions. Also, investigate technology accessibility among the families in your parish and brainstorm other ways to reach out and connect if necessary. Families Forming Disciples is highly adaptable.

[AL1]Are all the questions below meant to be virtual-specific? If so, maybe make clearer.

[AL2]Compare with above models offered (parents and kids together; parents separate from kids). Perhaps re-word for consistency.