

## **Family-Based Catechesis (FBC) Highlights**

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**What is Family-Based Catechesis (FBC)?** FBC, sometimes called *family faith formation*, is an alternative to traditional RE/CCD programs that equips and supports parents to catechize their children. The FBC model of religious education is based on the Catholic teaching that “Parents are the primary educators in the Faith.” By attending two meetings a month, parents receive everything they need to teach their children about the Catholic faith at home. The St. Matthew FBC program will provide nationally-recognized adult faith formation and youth religious education opportunities to strengthen the faith life of individuals, families, and the parish at large.

**Why change from the RE/CCD program we’ve used for years?** First off, we aren’t changing the religious education model because there’s blame to be assigned. I know that everyone involved in our parish’s religious education program dearly loves our children and wants the absolute best for them, which is an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. That goes from the parent, grandparent, or guardian who presents the child for religious education to the catechist, sponsor, or assistant who partners in that education. As Catholics, we believe that the union with Jesus in His Catholic Church is the promise of a peaceful and fulfilled life. So, loving and caring individuals have hopeful intentions or they wouldn’t put forth the effort towards educating their children with a Catholic religious education.

But, there is something wrong and it’s heart breaking! As cited in a Pew Research Center (PRC) study, and as highlighted by Matthew Kelly in his book [Rediscover Catholicism](#), there are more than thirty million former Catholics in the United States alone. That is one in every ten Americans, making former Catholics the second-largest Christian denomination in America (the first-largest being active Catholics). These former Catholics went

through RE/CCD or Catholic school and received the Sacraments during their formation. But, once they leave the home, they also leave their childhood faith as well. The primary (60%) reason cited for why they left their childhood faith is that they stopped believing in the Church’s teachings (PRC). Once they left home, these former Catholics’ spiritual roots weren’t deep enough to survive contact with a culture that is indifferent, if not openly hostile, to Catholic values.

We believe that the adult faith formation combined with youth religious education in the FBC model will provide a more solid foundation in strengthening the faith of Catholic individuals, families, and our parish and therefore reverse the trend widespread across the nation and in our own families.

**What will FBC change for my family?** The following are some highlights of the changes from the traditional Wednesday night RE program.

- FBC has only two monthly sessions instead of the typical four monthly sessions. The first session will be a Wednesday night session. The adults will meet in a group catechesis session while the youth will meet in classroom sessions similar to traditional RE where they’ll get catechist-led teaching. The second session of the month is a community session. For convenience, it will be either a Saturday or Sunday after Mass. It will provide an opportunity for the family to attend Mass and then participate in a faith formation and parish community building event such as a festival, picnic, movie night, game night, etc.
- FBC has two home lessons per month to do as a family. The lessons are fully prepared for the parent to lead and are based on the group catechesis taught during the Wednesday night meeting. Each lesson is designed to take about

45 minutes per lesson. If you think about it, parents spend about that amount of time just corralling and driving their children to and from RE/CCD each Wednesday night. Also, you can pick the day and time that's convenient for your family to accomplish the lessons. It will be easier to schedule a family trip or outing since there are fewer Wednesday night commitments. And, the entire family will learn and share more about their faith together. Instead of it being "Junior, tell me what you learned in RE tonight" as you drive home afterwards with the response being (altogether now) "Nothing"; you'll already know because you're doing the lessons together as a family. The lessons are designed to be done around the kitchen table and the whole family participates at once. So, if you have multiple children at different ages, you don't have separate sessions for each child.

**Will my child still be prepared for the Sacraments?** Yes. The FBC program we're choosing is "A Family of Faith" by the Sophia Institute. It's based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) and revolves around a four-year cycle. So, as you note in the CCC, the Sacraments are central throughout its teaching. In addition to the Sophia program, the youth will learn about the Sacraments during their Wednesday night catechesis sessions. This is especially true for the youth in second grade (First Reconciliation and First Holy Eucharist) and seventh and eighth grades (Confirmation). Youth preparing for these particular Sacraments will also have a few additional required dates for events such as retreats and reflection and/or rehearsal sessions.

**I don't have school-age children, can I participate in FBC?** Absolutely. Parishes who have implemented the FBC model excitedly tell how fruitful it is to having opened the group adult faith formation and community sessions up to the entire parish—empty nesters, home

schoolers, single parishioners, 5-day school families, etc. FBC can be a significant means of developing the faith life of the individual, the family, the parish, and the entire Kingdom of God.

**Questions?** We know you'll likely have questions about this new approach to religious formation for youth and adults. Please watch future Sunday bulletins for announcement of informational sessions. Also, feel free to call or email with your questions and/or inputs as well.

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