



“Come all you
who are thirsty,
come to the waters...”

Holy Redeemer Immaculate Conception Collaborative

serving Merrimac, Newbury, Newburyport & West Newbury

Project Nazareth Overview (pre-K-5th Grade) 2020-2021

Starting this year, we will be implementing an exciting new approach to faith formation that empowers and equips parents to be the primary teachers of the faith to their children. This approach will use a structure and set of resources put out by the Archdiocese of Boston called *Project Nazareth*. This is a change decided after long discernment, a move towards respecting the true, intended roles of the family nucleus and the parish in children’s formation. (Please see letter previously released on the move to Family Faith Formation at HRIC and further explanation below)

First, *Project Nazareth* is built in a way to not overburden with formal lesson plans, quizzes, and worksheets. Instead, the conversation and practice of the faith in the home is broken up in small “bites” that are meant to be woven into your weekly routines rather than as a separate, hour-long formal lesson time once a week. When you are driving in the car, when you are sitting at meals, when you are getting ready for bed, all these are occasions to bring up teachings, ask questions, pray or engage in a faith-based activity.

This is fully *customizable* to *your* family dynamic and routine. We will supply the materials, teachings and suggestions, all you have to do is decide which to use and when during your week. The resources are compiled in easy-to-access format and it spreads the faith formation of your children out over the course of the year.

There are **FOUR elements** to focus on each week. *If you don’t get to all four, no worries! You do what you can.*

- 1) “Ponder”
- 2) “Listen”
- 3) “Pray”
- 4) “Act”

The “Ponder” element involves proclaiming a Catholic teaching in a sentence or two and then asking questions and having a conversation about it with your children, in language they understand.

The “Listen” element involves breaking open a Bible, reading a short scripture passage and pondering its meaning for you and your children. It is about immersing your family little by little into the larger, *living* narrative of salvation history.

In the “Pray” element, you teach a Catholic prayer and practice it during the week.

Lastly, you all “Act” by doing something as a family related to the teaching: a craft, a nature walk, art, listen to music etc., then reflect on the experience.

The Parish Collaborative's Role

1. Family Groups
2. Collaborative Family Gatherings
3. Supplying Resources
4. Creating Community through Social Media

First, we will be pairing up families in groups with a group leader. We will ask that you meet on Zoom once a month as a group, with the leader, to check in with each other, see how things are going, field questions and pray together. This will be key, as we are not meant to journey alone!

We will also have Family Gatherings, either online or in person, depending on COVID-19 restrictions, throughout the year, celebrating the various seasons of the Church (i.e. All Saints Day, Christmas, Holy Week etc.). These will be moments of encounter with the larger community, filled with fun and learning moments. Check below for dates. *We will start the year online, on Zoom, and assess as we move through the year.*

Third, we have purchased a few subscriptions as a Parish Collaborative to online databases of video and audio resources. CatholicBrain.com has *loads* of videos (start with *Adventure Catechism* for the little ones, for instance), word searches and other worksheets, if you wish to re-inforce what the kids are learning. FORMED.org, the online "Catholic Netflix" also has loads of beautiful, rich content related to the faith for all ages. Word on Fire ENGAGE has top-quality films from Bishop Robert Barron, mostly for middle school ages and up. We will send a separate document with all these resources and how to sign up for them, if you are not already, once we get closer to September.

Lastly, we will create social media challenges for each month to help create a sense of community fun and inspiration among families. Families who participate will be entered into raffles for prizes!

The "Why?" Behind the "What?"

Most importantly, studies show that families who actively teach the faith to their children as their primary catechists (teachers of the faith) are *vastly more likely to raise children who stay Catholic as they grow up*. This makes perfect sense, as our parents make the biggest impression on us. Our Church has a long tradition of holding that parents are the primary teachers of the faith and that the family is the building block of not just society, but the Church itself.

Also, due to COVID-19, all classes would have had to be online, behind a video camera, every Sunday. Since your children are all behind computer or phone screens much of the time already, making them sit behind a computer screen for yet another day, a day when they hopefully get a break, seemed unreasonable and inappropriate. This cultural *moment* points toward a faith formation born from the everyday life of the family.

Lastly, I want to suggest that this will bless you, the parent, giving you time to take a fresh look at the faith as an adult, through the eyes of your children. For most of us, we have not had the occasion to deeply consider again the beauty of the basic proclamation of the Gospel, or the doctrines of the Church. It is simply not the stuff of usual dinner conversation with friends and family. But what questions are more important to truly engage deeply with than "Why do I exist?" "What happens when I die?" "What/who do we mean when we speak of 'God'?" "What is God like?" "What does God desire for me?" "Who is Jesus and why is He so controversial?" or "Why is there a Church?" Our hope is that this will lead all to a deeper understanding that leads to a deeper sense of trust, hope and love... in effect a deeper fulfillment of our longing for true, eternal happiness, which is what Catholicism is really all about!

Families with Children with students also in 6th-8th Grade

While Project Nazareth was developed with pre-K through 5th Grade in mind, if you have children 6th-8th grade and would like to have the same type of at-home formation with them, there are resources online to reach this age group and keep your family journeying together. However, we will also have an online, weekly Zoom meeting option for this age group, conscious of their desire often to connect with peers out of the home at this age. Please see the Faith Formation tab on the website for the 6th-8th Grade structure and schedule and let us know what you and your child prefer.

Registration & Fee

Registration Forms can be found on the Faith Formation website

\$125 per Family

Since our operating costs are a little lower with Project Nazareth, we have dropped the fee a bit, from \$185 per child to \$125 per family. With this fee, we are able to pay for the resources mentioned above, and other software that will help this run more smoothly.

Important Dates 2020-2021

September 20th and 27th – Parent Meetings via Zoom @ 1:00 PM

October 4th – Project Nazareth Kick-off Gathering via Zoom @ 1:00 PM

Starting in October, you will meet with your catechist and “Family Group” via Zoom, once a month

November 1st – All Saints Family Gathering via Zoom @ 1:00 PM

December 13th – Advent/Christmas Family Gathering – via Zoom @ 1:00 PM

January 10th – Baptism of the Lord & Ordinary Time Family Gathering - TBD

February 21st – Lent Family Gathering - TBD

March 28th – Holy Week/Easter Family Gathering - TBD

May 23rd – Pentecost/End of Year Family Gathering - TBD