

**SOME PRACTICAL AND CONCRETE THINGS TO BEGIN DOING RIGHT AWAY
IN “BEGINNING” ADULT FAITH FORMATION
IN YOUR PARISH**

A pastoral plan for adult faith formation within the parish is necessary. It takes time – especially when just beginning – for all the necessary steps to put this in place.

Yet, that doesn't mean that nothing should happen in the meantime.

Try these as you begin ... and keep them going all the time.

- Watch your language. Adult formation is not “education.” (And, many adults don't want to go back to school.) Avoid school language (“classes”, etc.) when talking about adult formation.
- Watch your atmosphere. Don't make the learning space like a classroom, because adult formation is not just a class. (And, some adults do not have good memories of classrooms.)
- Reflect with your staff and Parish Council: how adult friendly is our parish? Explore: how much of the parish budget is for adult formation; for the formation of parish leadership? When parish calendaring is done for the year, what goes on first – children's programs and events – or adult formation?
- At pastoral staff meetings and/or parish Council and leadership meetings, close the meeting with the question: how will the decisions that have been made here today effect the formation of the adults in our parish, our neighborhood, our community? In answering the question, pay attention not just to knowledge and information, but to formation, to discipleship, commitment to service and mission to the world.
- Seize every opportunity for adult formation. Within every parish there are many gatherings – catechists, liturgical and musical ministers, committees, social outreach, men's and women's groups, etc. Every time adults gather, formation can be a component. They come for the information, but they can also be formed through faith sharing, prayer and study. Many parishes that are doing this, use the Sunday readings. At the beginning of each meeting, time is spent in breaking open the Word for the coming Sunday with the intent of making a real connection between the Word and the lived reality of everyday.
- Seize every opportunity. People come for social events. A Seniors Breakfast, Men's Fellowship Group, or Dinner Evening for Couples can include a talk and/or group sharing of some topic of interest – or one that will stretch their thinking.

- Seize every opportunity. Where do adults already meet? How can you make that a place for adult catechesis? Look not just on the parish grounds, but in the neighborhoods and community.
- Seize every opportunity. Enclose a three-minute reading in every parish mailing, in every letter to parents. Use the Sunday church bulletin to its fullest potential. Include short “zingers” or one-liners (or three-minute readings) to answer a question, to quote a Church document, to explain Scripture, to pose a reflection question, to suggest a justice and peace action, etc.
- Seize every opportunity. Use your parish website to provide formation: downloadable articles, frequently asked questions, podcasts, videos, blogs, online book studies, etc.
- Seize every opportunity. Pay attention to the local issues with which your adult community deals with every day. Needs responded to are the key for motivating ongoing adult formation.
- What if instead of “you need the message - I have the message” homilies or adult programs to passive assemblies or gatherings, we risked a more dynamic model where everyone is invited to exchange insights and ideas. Providing places and atmosphere for people to talk about the things that matter is the heart of formation - is the means to help them connect faith and life.
- Invite parishioners to a Think Tank. Aim for representation from all age groups, types of family settings, etc. Consider the needs of adults in your parish and dream about all that could be offered to support the adult parishioners in their on-going faith growth.
- *Our Hearts Were Burning within Us* uses the six tasks of catechesis as the content areas for adult formation. Chart these six areas; place under each all of the parish events which help people grow in faith. Looking at all efforts in one place is an affirming process and a helpful tool for future planning.
- Often people will get involved in outreach activities, especially during the seasons of Advent and Lent. Then, an adult formation opportunity is advertised and no one shows up. Why not provide the experience (the outreach activity) first and then invite people to take time to “debrief” it? For instance, Catholic Social Teaching will be much more effectively studied following involvement in a homeless shelter or soup kitchen.

For Reflection/Discussion

- ✓ Which of these could we implement immediately?
- ✓ Is there anything here that would be a challenge? Why?
- ✓ What other people do we need ministering with us so that some of these might happen?
- ✓ As our Adult Faith Formation Committee (and others) works on our strategic plan for adult faith formation within the parish, which components/concepts from these suggested ideas might be included?
- ✓ Which of these ideas would meet the needs/interests of our parishioners at this time? Who is waiting to be invited? What would be the best ways for publicity?

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