



**This Fall Divine Mercy Catholic Church is introducing a new way of doing Faith Formation called “Family Formation.”**

*This model is for all families regardless of where they go to school. (Not only for public school families)*

The **family-based** curriculum, includes **adult catechesis and training for parents**, it is **founded on the**

**teachings of the Catholic Church**, and is designed to make living the Faith a life-long learning adventure. The lessons are simple, follow the church calendar, are designed to help the family prepare for Sunday Mass and to better follow the bible. **Dad’s are strongly encouraged to play a key role.**

### **Traditional Model**

For many years the Catholic Church has gathered children and teens every Wednesday to give them religious instruction. This model has required many hours of service by dedicated volunteers who sincerely love teaching youth about Jesus. These amazing volunteers have been serving as modern day apostles to families by providing our children and teens with instruction by word and by example.

The Church has always believed that conversion of life is at the heart of all we do. Nowhere is this truer than in families. Strong families and those that are struggling, we are all in this together. We can all learn from each other and benefit from the love and support of our parish family!

*“Parents are the principal and first educators of their children.”*  
*Catechism of the Catholic Church 1653*

*The family is, so to speak, the domestic church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children...*  
*–Vatican II, LG 11*

### **A New Way**

*All of the baptized are called to be an apostle of the Divine Mercy of Jesus in the modern world. Where ever we are in our faith, God wants to meet us right there and take us further.*

### **With this in mind we move forward in faith.**

The new model promotes parents as the primary educators of their children in the Catholic Faith. Families gather **once a month** on first Wednesdays. Pre K (age 3) – 8<sup>th</sup> grade will be dropped off by parents at 6:00pm at the school and the Mother Samuel Building. **The parents**

**come to the new church** (infants welcome) on Albers to receive resources and instruction beginning at 6:15 and ending at 7:15pm then picking up children/teens at 7:30pm. (Confirmation will continue to meet weekly – watch for details from Ellie as the fall grows closer)

The children/teens will receive encouraging lessons/activities around a central unified theme. At the church, parents will be equipped with a monthly packet of home lessons/activities (same theme as children) to lead their family in learning the Catholic Faith. These lessons are to be taken home and worked on as a family and are primarily for grades 1-6 (the older ones can assist or even lead some lessons). Each home lesson takes about 45 minutes and promotes Sunday worship as a family.

For today’s busy family we hope that this new flexibility will enable your family to come together weekly to share faith and grow in holiness as a family. Please see the Family Formation frequently asked questions section in this newsletter.

# FAQs about Family Formation

## **How can parents who may not know their faith well teach their children the Faith at home?**

Parents do not have to be experts in the Faith to use Family Formation. Each lesson is written at an elementary school level, and is easily understood by everyone. By simply spending a small amount of time in preparation each week, parents can become familiar with the topic in the upcoming lesson. Additional references from Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church are given for those interested in further study. *One of the richest blessings of Family Formation comes as families learn*

*about the beauty and truth of the Catholic faith together. Many parents have testified to the fact that, through Family Formation, they have come to learn and understand the Catholic faith for the first time.*

## **How do you include younger and older children in the Home Lessons?**

Each Home Lesson offers parents a great deal of flexibility and a variety of activities. This allows parents, who are the best judges of their child's needs, skills, and attention span, to tailor lessons to their family's needs. We encourage parents to challenge, but not overwhelm their children. With younger children it is recommended you approach topics at the most basic level knowing that they will be covered again the next time through the three-year cycle.

## **Can you use Family Formation with high school students?**

Family Formation is designed primarily for use with kindergarten through sixth grade students, but many families get all their children (including preschoolers and highschoolers) involved in doing the Home Lessons. The games, stories, and activities that reinforce each lesson are fun ways for the entire family to learn, and there are many benefits to having your entire family grow in the faith together.

## **What do you offer for sacramental preparation?**

There is a separate Family Formation program for those preparing for the sacraments of first Reconciliation and first Holy Communion. Students in our program (typically second graders), meet at the same classroom time as regular Family Formation students. Instead of learning about the topic of the month, they are on a separate track, concentrating on their preparation for one of these sacraments. Each sacramental prep student purchases a Family Formation workbook containing Home Lessons to do with their parents the other three weeks each month. They prepare for their first Reconciliation during the fall semester and, after receiving that sacrament, they prepare for first Holy Communion in the spring.

## **I am a single parent / my spouse is not Catholic. Will this work for me?**

Absolutely! All parents are given the graces necessary to lead their children to our Heavenly Father. The additional effectiveness of family-based catechesis is a wonderful blessing to families in these more difficult situations. The clear, simple explanations of the faith as presented in Family Formation lessons are a great way for a non-Catholic parent to learn about Catholicism and to have their questions answered. Simply use Family Formation in the same way as other families.

## **What about children who go to Catholic schools?**

Faith formation at home is critical, regardless of a child's school environment. By using Family Formation, a family can grow together in their faith, and the shared faith experiences offered make for many teachable moments in the normal events of family life. Children receive significant lessons in the importance of continual education in the Faith as they see their parents giving priority to their own progress. At every age, growth in our faith is important!

## **How many workers are necessary to implement Family Formation in a parish?**

We need prayer support, classroom teachers, musicians willing to lead praise and worship, monthly adult speakers, childcare workers, people to pass out Home Lessons, and area coordinators. All members of the Body of Christ are endowed with unique gifts to be used His service. As with many areas of parish life, this principle is important in making your Family Formation program a success. Encouraging parishioners to use their gifts in service of the Church's educational mission is important to your program and to their individual Christian growth.



## How *Family Formation* Works

*Family Formation* combines a monthly church gathering (where children meet in grade-specific class settings while parents gather for adult catechesis and formation) and weekly family Home Lessons where parents, equipped with materials and an understanding of the lessons, teach their children the Faith.

The program is based on the school year from September through May.

### **Monthly Church Gatherings**

- Families gather at church on the **1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month.**
- Students in **Grades K-6 meet in classes**, divided by grade level. (Happens at MSB and DMCS 6:00-7:30pm)
- **Parents have a separate gathering** where they are catechized, encouraged, and equipped. This adult catechesis component is key to the transmission of Faith in the home. (Happens at NEW CHURCH 6:15-7:15pm)
- Parents and students are learning about the same topic of Faith.
- **Classroom catechists** are provided complete curriculum, which is easy to use and engaging for the students.
- Families are given a packet of **weekly Home Lessons** to use for the rest of the month, at home with their children.

### **Weekly Family Home Lessons**

- **Enable parents** to be the primary educators of their children in the Catholic Faith.
- Are **easy-to-use.**
- Take approximately **one hour per week** to complete.
- Include **games, activities, booklets, and CDs** to keep learning fun.
- Are designed for **kids in Grades K-6.** For information on curriculum for preschoolers (3-4 year olds), see additional curriculum.
- **Bring the whole family together** as they study each lesson and then apply it to their day-to-day family life.
- **Reinforce Sunday Mass**— *Family Formation* lessons reflect the liturgical year and immerse families into the life and seasons of the Church.

### **Catechist Training and Preparation**

- Classroom catechists **meet one time per month** in preparation for the monthly parish gathering.
- Using the *Family Formation Catechist Training DVDs* or a trained leader from our parish, catechists are presented the adult formation topic for the next monthly parish gathering.
- Catechists are trained to present the classroom curriculum materials.

Stay tuned...