

Building Strong Catholic Families... It Takes a Partnership!

Partnering with Parents to Bring Home the Faith



All across the country, pastors—along with parish and school leaders—are asking for effective ways to engage parents in the life and mission of the church, as well as seeking ways to help them take ownership as the primary leaders of faith within their families. To work together toward this desirable goal, we invite you to consider a dynamic grassroots process, designed to reach out to parents in a way that empowers and challenges them to form *Strong Catholic Families*.

What is Strong Catholic Families About?

Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth is an ongoing parish- or school-based process that engages and strengthens parents and families in growing as a domestic church through a close and vital partnership with the parish and school community.

How Does it Work?

The *Strong Catholic Families* process is made up of four distinct steps that lead to numerous avenues of faith growth within families and the entire faith community.

The process begins with consultations between a diocesan consultant and parish/school leadership. During these meetings, the consultant presents an overview of the *Strong Catholic Families* dynamic and assists the leaders in assessing their readiness to begin building strong Catholic families and in thinking through the implications this direction will have upon current programming and structures. Once the leadership is prepared to make this initial commitment, it begins to assemble a local team of parents and staff to prepare for the next steps.

Step 2 seeks to engage parents through presentations and dialogues with a diocesan-trained presenter who uses contemporary research combined with engaging visuals and pertinent stories to help parents understand the critical role they possess in how faith is lived in their home and especially in their children's lives. Follow-up gatherings will help engage parents in exploring their

emerging needs and concerns while exploring practical strategies for how to best grow in faith as a family.

Step 3 involves additional critical reflection and discernment by all involved: staff, leaders, parents, and the local *Strong Catholic Families* Team, concerning the next steps in partnering with one another to empower and support family faith growth.

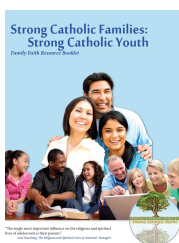
Step 4 is an ongoing and evolving movement comprised of implementing new strategies, further reflection and evaluation, and continued commitment to supporting the growing partnerships between the institutional church/school and the domestic church. This cycle continues throughout the years ahead as more and more families become empowered to grow in their Catholic faith.

What Happens as a Result?

In a nutshell, evangelization! But the specific look is as diverse as the hundreds of parishes and schools and the dozens of dioceses who make up the growing *Strong Catholic Families* network because each local community decides its best direction given the unique resources, culture, and history of the community. Some local responses have included the following:

- *Adjusting program structures to accommodate family faith gatherings between Masses.*
- *Parent groups that meet during sacramental sessions.*
- *Sessions on how to lead prayer and share faith in the home, developing family mission statements, and more.*
- *Coaching parents to pass on the Catholic faith to kids.*
- *Intergenerational Vacation Bible School programs.*
- *Online webinars for parents on Catholic faith topics.*

What Is the Cost?



There is very minimal cost for this initiative because *your diocese has already purchased the copyright permissions for you to use every year!* A community may choose to purchase color copies of the *Family Faith Resource Booklet* and table tent prayer cards, which each family receives during the initial parent session, but permission is granted for these resources to be copied locally as needed.

Who is Behind This Initiative?

The *Strong Catholic Families* initiative is presented in partnership by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM), the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL), the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers (NACFLM), and the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA). It is also available in Spanish!

