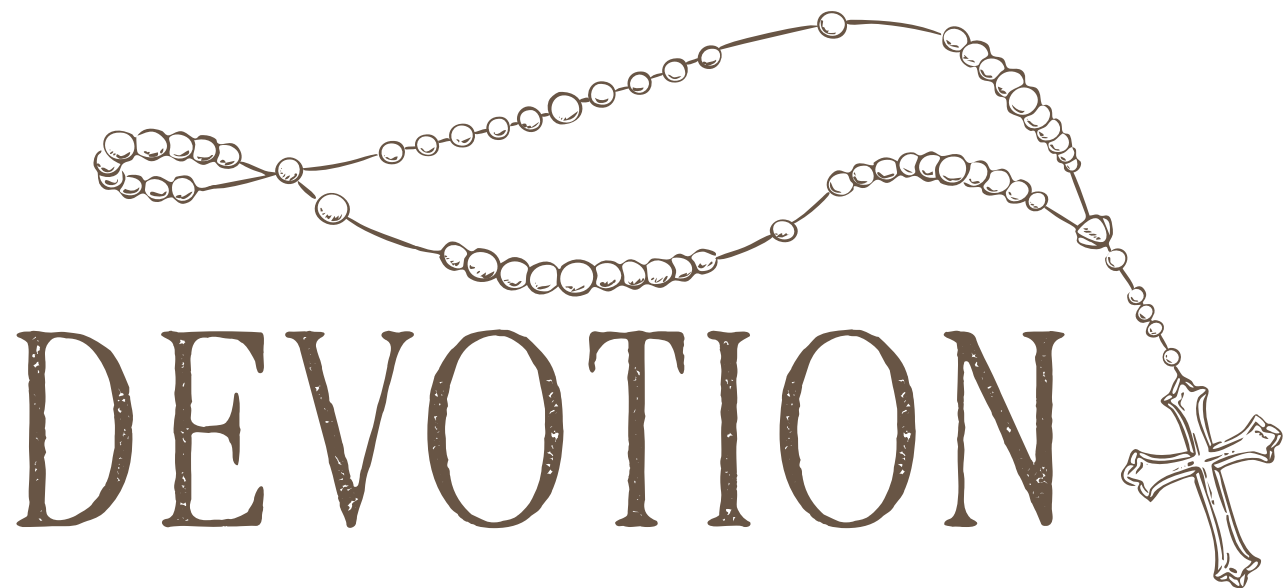




Leader Guide



Faith and Family Life
Catholic Ministries

AT-CHURCH CONTENT

It is important to have families gathered periodically throughout the Devotion process. The goal of gathering is:

- To encourage, deepen, and support their experience of practicing devotions at home with any tips, inspiration, or information.
- To meet and hear from other families on a similar journey. There is wisdom in any room of families, especially parents!
- To give families a positive and meaningful experience at-church.
- To pray together - for each other and for the entire community.

This resource has been developed to support you in facilitating 12 supplemental Sessions, held at-church. The Sessions are designed to have parents and children together. There is plenty of content to fill a 1-1.5 hour time frame in the Sessions. There is an Intro Add-On that should be used to introduce the experience in whichever month you will be beginning.

There are supplies that need to be pulled together to help bring these Sessions to life. We have given you supply lists. We have also suggested ways to set a mood in the room; candles, music, dimming the lights, etc. We feel it is critical to set holy spaces to lead families into deeper intimacy with Christ and themselves. We cannot over emphasize the impact of simple but beautiful decor, great hospitality, and intimate prayerful spaces. Your attention to detail tells everyone this is important; we prepared for you!

We realize families are in different places and stages in their own faith journeys. We have written Sessions we feel best take into account today's families. It is our hope that these Sessions meet them where they are at and slowly lead them into something more. Feel free to scale the material up or down. It is most important that families leave with a positive experience of Church and community, feeling like they have a place in it.

ACCOMPANIMENT TEAM NEEDS

We realize each of our directors have different gifts; some are wonderful teachers, some are storytellers, others are better facilitating small groups, some are gifted in finding others to present material. Use your strengths to lead your family Sessions, and look for others who can take the pieces you are not as confident in. It takes a team!

Facilitator:

- Choosing a facilitator to lead your Sessions as an MC from the front is an important decision. They will introduce and weave together the content for each Session. This person should be warm, engaging, confident, and it helps if they have a good sense of humor. This person needs to be open and non-judgmental. It will be their voice that will help the group grow together.

Companion Families:

- We recommend placing 1 companion family in each small group of 10 families, if possible. This will help provide a relatable connection to the parish community. Companion families will focus on building relationships and supporting the facilitator in guiding the at-church Sessions. Make sure companion families feel comfortable with the flow of each Session. Leave time at the end of each Session with the companion families to evaluate the experience. To make this a great experience for all, we must be checking in regularly and making any needed changes as soon as possible. Invest in time with your companion families. Having a strong team of people committed to the same mission helps everyone. Offer time to get to know one another, provide skills training, and spend time in prayer together. We want our families to feel like they are being invited into a group that has been preparing for them and enjoys each other.

Hospitality:

- Hospitality is about much more than setting out cookies and water bottles. Great hospitality is the root for the growing that will take place. Having a team that interacts well together, and welcomes you into their community, will help the families get comfortable almost immediately. This will produce greater engagement in the Sessions. This type of hospitality requires the facilitator and companions to become friendly with the families before they ever begin. It includes being “real” through sharing, vulnerability, and laughter from the minute your families arrive.

- How the room “feels” is also an important part of the hospitality recipe. Covered tables, simple centerpieces, and the glow of a few candles will encourage the families to lean into the conversation, like a great dinner party. Take the time to set the room in advance, so that families walk into a space that feels prepared for them. A prayer table up front with changing images each Session can also be a small voice speaking into the room. Find creative people in your community who have a heart for families and let them loose to work their magic.

Intercessors:

- Having intentional intercessors who are praying for your families and your ministry is an important step to staying on mission. Prayer always needs to be integral to the work we do. People in your parish community who take the time to talk with Jesus often and who understand the struggles and difficulties facing families are perfect to help in this role. These prayer warriors can be organized as a group, or can individually come before God for the needs of the parish families each day. Prayer can be specially centered around this time of growing in devotion and prayer.