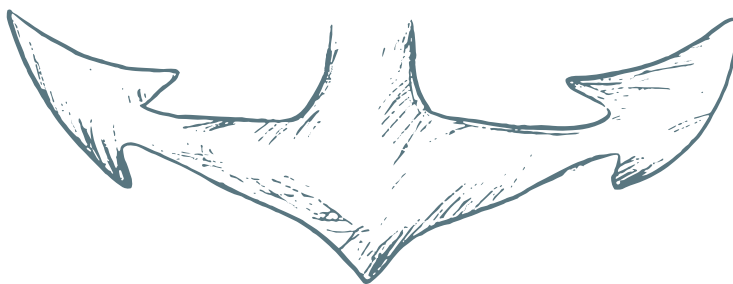


# CLAIM



## *Leader Guide*



Faith and Family Life  
Catholic Ministries

# AN INVITATION

You have been invited to welcome a new member into the Church! Oftentimes, these first moments can be missed opportunities. Baptism becomes a quick cultural celebration of faith, rather than the sacramental beginning of a new child into a life and community of faith. You have the chance to change this fundamental first encounter.

*Claim* is a resource to support you in this pursuit.

*Claim* ultimately calls parents into intentionality. It allows them to look at their own faith roots and encourages them to have thoughtful discussions about beliefs for their family going forward. *Claim* presents the sacrament of Baptism through content that helps parents understand its rich meaning and prepares them to participate more fully in the sacrament on Baptism day. The vitality of your Church community will speak loudly as parents come to fill out paperwork, attend sessions, and meet other couples. Use these opportunities to let your hospitality, encouragement, and support be the place they meet Jesus.

*“The catechesis of parents who are asking to have their children baptized: the community, in the person of the catechists, should take care to welcome, listen to, and understand the reasons for the parents’ request, and provide an appropriate pathway for them to reawaken the grace of the gift of faith that they have received. It is also good for the godparents to be involved in this journey, and to provide adequate time for it to unfold” (Directory for Catechesis 232c).*

*In the journey of initiation into the Christian life, the Church calls for a re-evaluation of the identity and mission of the godfather and the godmother, as support for the educational effort of the parents. Their task is “to show the candidates how to practice the Gospel in personal and social life, to sustain the candidates in moments of hesitancy and anxiety, to bear witness, and to guide the candidates’ progress in the baptismal life.” It is known that often the choice of godparents is not motivated by faith but based on family or social customs: this has contributed in no small way to the degradation of these educational figures. In view of the responsibility that this role involves, the Christian community should indicate, with discernment and a creative spirit, pathways of catechesis for godparents, which may help them to rediscover the gift of faith and of belonging to the Church. Those who are selected for this role often feel called upon to reawaken their baptismal faith and to initiate a renewed journey of commitment and witness. The possibility that they might refuse to accept this responsibility may have consequences for them that should be evaluated with great pastoral care. In cases where the objective requirement for a person to be able to carry out this task are absent (requirements that should have been made clear in the discussion that precedes selection) in agreement with the families and according to the discernment of the pastors, godparents can be chosen from among the pastoral workers (catechists, teachers, organizers) who stand as witnesses of faith and of ecclesial presence. (DC 125)*

## A FEW TIPS

- By reading and experiencing the content yourself, you will be best equipped to accompany this resource. We recommend first becoming familiar with the material before implementing it.
- Have deacons or a Baptism team call couples to set up a *Visit* to discuss the *Claim* box and to journey with them throughout the formation process.
- *Claim* At-Church Sessions bring participants together to share their experiences from the Family Meetings and to be led deeper into the mystery.
- Participants can be placed into small groups of 3-4 families to share this journey with. Companions can help weave together these small groups into a small faith community.
- It is important that you put in place next steps for these new families. For example: offer dinner with babysitting at the parish, family fun nights, parenting workshops, reaching out, etc.
- *Claim* can be preceded or succeeded by *Seek* and *Root* for Parents. Beginning or following up with these two programs will give them a solid foundation of faith to build upon.
- Passing on our faith is most importantly about our witness. Each time a couple interacts with our community, faith leaders have an opportunity for witness. Let us not be afraid of being witness forward rather than requirement forward. If they don't first know that the Lord is good they will never know the requirements are for their good.
- Check in with families regularly using our Family Follow Through system available on Martha or as a PDF. This helps with accountability.
- Share photos from the Family Follow Throughs in your bulletin, newsletter, emails, or bulletin boards.

# CLAIM FOR PARENTS

## AT-HOME CONTENT

*Claim* is a Baptism family experience designed for early childhood (0-5) and middle childhood (6-10) aged children. Invite parents to reflect on the gift and responsibility of raising a child in the faith and equip them to actively participate in the liturgical celebration. Inspire families to live out their faith through hands-on activities and meaningful conversations. Watch families dive deeper into the incredible gift God gives us of Baptism, with *Claim*.

Inside the box parents will receive everything needed to enjoy 5 Parent Meetings or 5 Family Meetings together. If they are preparing to baptize an infant or young child under 4 that does not have any older siblings, they will utilize the Parent Meetings. They can share the activity and what they learned with their young children as they are able to understand. If they are preparing to baptize an infant that has siblings over 4 or are preparing a child over 4, they will utilize the Family Meetings and include the entire family. Parent Meetings and Family Meetings are printed one after the other, so they can find Family Meeting 1 right after Parent Meeting 1 and so on. There is a special component for the Godparents as well, which the parents will learn more about in Parent Meeting 2 or Family Meeting 2.

## AT- CHURCH CONTENT

It is important to have parents gather periodically throughout the *Claim* process. The goal of gathering is to:

- Find out what is going well and what they are struggling with in the *Claim* Box Parent/Family Meetings.
- To meet and hear from other parents on a similar journey. There is wisdom in any room of adults, especially parents!
- To provide experiential activities to help support and bring to life the studying they have been doing.
- To pray together - for each other and for their families.

## CLAIM - PARENTS

This resource has been provided to support you in facilitating Sessions held at-church throughout the *Claim* experience for the whole family that are designed to complement and enhance the at-home content. The Sessions include different content for parents and middle childhood (6-10) aged children. They are sold separately to allow you to use the content combination that best fits your situation. Parents preparing to baptize an infant or young child under 4 that does not have any older siblings, we invite them to utilize the Parent Meetings which can be accompanied by the Parent and Godparent Sessions alone. Parents preparing to baptize an infant that has siblings over 4 or are preparing a child over 4, we invite them to utilize the Family Meetings and include the entire family, which can be accompanied by the Parent and Godparent Sessions along with the Middle Childhood Sessions. When used together, parents and their children will be separated for the first part of each Session and ends with a closing prayer for the whole family. There is plenty of content to fill a 1-1.5 hour time frame.

We suggest beginning with a *Visit* with the family. This can be done by your priest, deacon, or a baptismal team member. The goal of this Visit is to get to know the parents and make them feel comfortable as they begin this process. This is meant to be very inviting and the parents should leave feeling welcomed and supported.

If you are only using the Parent and Godparent Sessions you should introduce the *Claim* Box and present it to the parents. This should feel like a gift. These new parents are worth investing in! Open the box together and briefly go over the focus of the Parent Meetings and the items in the box. Make sure you are very familiar with all the content. Invite parents to finish the first 2 at-home Parent Meetings (they are brief but very worthwhile) before at-church Session 1. Be sure to let them know if childcare will be offered during the Sessions.

If you are using the Parent and Godparent Session along with the Middle Childhood Sessions and introducing families to Immediate Formation resources for the first time, be sure to begin with the Celebrate Session available before Session 1. This Session which will introduce the sacramental life, introduce them to the *Claim* Box Family Meetings, and invite them to complete the first 2 at-home Family Meetings before at-church Session 1.

After Session 1, Parents/Families will complete Parent/Family Meeting 3 and 4 before coming back for Session 2, which will include their godparents.

There are some things that need to be pulled together to help bring these lessons to life. We have given you supply lists. We have also suggested ways to set a mood in the

## CLAIM - PARENTS

room; candles, music, dimming the lights, setting the tables, etc. We feel it is critical to set holy spaces to lead parents into deeper intimacy with Christ and themselves. We can not 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! It is recommended to have parents sit in small groups. Depending on the group size they can answer these prompts to the whole room or their small group.

As a Church we are just beginning the journey of calling parents into the opportunity of forming their children and themselves more deeply. We realize parents are in all different places and stages in their own faith journeys. We have written Sessions we feel best take into account today's parents. The majority of the parents we encounter have very little theological background, but have the wisdom of their own lives to reflect on. We have found that when given helpful prompts and time to process, they do very well in sharing with each other. Parents, for the most part, are coming to these Sessions because they have been told they have to, and probably are not expecting anything that will truly impact their lives. 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.

To make the Sessions extra special, we encourage you to provide a simple one-pot (crock pot, slow cooker) meal. You can make the recipe cards available for the parents and/or godparents. This will come in handy for those first few weeks and months when parents are adjusting to feeding themselves any way that they can.

## 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 volunteers to present material. Use your strengths to lead your Sessions, and look for others who can take the pieces you are not as confident in. It takes a team! Invest in time with your accompaniment team. 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 parents to feel like they are being invited into a group that has been preparing for them and enjoys each other. Our Beside resources can be helpful in forming and growing your accompaniment team.

## CLAIM - PARENTS

### **Facilitator:**

- Choosing a facilitator to lead your Sessions as an MC from the front is an important decision. This person 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.

### **Companions:**

- We recommend placing a companion in each small group if possible. Make sure companions feel comfortable with the flow of each Session. It is very helpful to have them walk through a sample Session together. Leave time at the end of each Session with the companions to evaluate the experience. To make this a great experience for all we must be checking in regularly, making any needed changes as soon as possible. The companions should be made aware of the following:
  - Make sure each group member has the chance to participate.
  - Do not allow any group member to control the sharing.
  - Do not make anyone feel forced to share. Parents can decide to “pass.”
  - Make sure all parents feel respected and listened to. Having cell phones put away will help with this.
  - Companions will set the tone for the sharing. If they want a deeper, more thoughtful response from parents, they will need to model that in their own sharing. The group will usually follow their lead.
  - Do not monopolize the sharing. It works well if companions begin the sharing and then pass it on to the other members.
  - Companions should be listening to all parent responses, and be ready to ask follow up questions that help expand parent’s answers. It is important that they remember information discussed and check in with parents in future Sessions: “How is your sick mother doing?”, “How was your vacation time with your family that you were looking forward to?”.
  - Each group sharing time is preempted by a journaling and reflection time for processing. This should help the parents be prepared to share. No one likes to be put on the spot.
  - If anything is ever discussed in small group time that is inappropriate or alarming it should be brought to the attention of the Faith Formation Director.

### **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

## CLAIM - PARENTS

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 that facilitator and companions become friendly with the families from the moment they arrive. It includes asking good questions, being vulnerable, and helping everyone feel seen.

- 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 parents 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 preparing for Baptism.



# CLAIM FOR MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

## AT-HOME CONTENT

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Inside the box parents will receive everything needed to enjoy 5 Parent Meetings or 5 Family Meetings together. If they are preparing to baptize an infant or young child under 4 that does not have any older siblings, they will utilize the Parent Meetings. They can share the activity and what they learned with their young children as they are able to understand. If they are preparing to baptize an infant that has siblings over 4 or are preparing a child over 4, they will utilize the Family Meetings and include the entire family. Parent Meetings and Family Meetings are printed one after the other, so they can find Family Meeting 1 right after Parent Meeting 1 and so on. There is a special component for the Godparents as well, which the parents will learn more about in Parent Meeting 2 or Family Meeting 2.

## AT- CHURCH CONTENT

It is important to have children gathered periodically throughout the *Claim* process. The goal of gathering is to:

- To prepare them for the Family Meetings at-home with any reflections, inspiration, or information that will support them.
- To have a positive experience with other children at-church.
- To pray together - for each other and for their families.

## CLAIM - MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

This resource has been provided to support you in facilitating Sessions held at-church throughout the *Claim* experience for the whole family that are designed to complement and enhance the at-home content. These Sessions include content designed for middle childhood (6-10). Each Session ends with a closing prayer for the whole family. There is plenty of content to fill a 1-1.5 hour time frame.

When using the Parent and Godparent Session along with the Middle Childhood Sessions and introducing families to Immediate Formation resources for the first time, be sure to begin with the Celebrate Session available before Session 1. This Session which will introduce the sacramental life, introduce them to the *Claim* Box Family Meetings, and invite them to complete the first 2 at-home Family Meetings before at-church Session 1. After Session 1, Families will complete Family Meetings 3 and 4 before coming back for Session 2, which will include their godparents.

There are some things 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 the environment. We feel it is critical to set holy spaces to lead children into deeper intimacy with Christ and themselves. We can not 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!

Each Session begins around a prayer table with items related to that Session's theme. This helps to engage the imagination of the children and provide tangible connections to what they will be learning. There will also be other games, crafts, activities, songs and teachings that will assist in preparing the children to have a successful and meaningful intentional faith conversation at-home with their parents through a Family Meeting. The main teaching is the responsibility of the parents as the primary educators of the faith. What happens at-church is orientated toward the support of this. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the at-home content as well found in the *Claim* Box. Feel free to scale the material up or down. Use all of the material or pick and choose the sections that best fit your time. 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 volunteers to present material. Use your strengths to lead the Sessions, and look for others who can take the pieces you are not as confident in. It takes a team! Invest in time with your accompaniment team. 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 parents to feel like they are being invited into a group that has been preparing for them and enjoys each other. Our Beside resources can be helpful in forming and growing your accompaniment team.

## **Catechist:**

- Catechists will be leading and guiding the children in their Sessions. This will include playing games, leading crafts, having conversations with a small group, managing group dynamics, and providing a safe trusted space for the children to feel a part of. The catechists should be made aware of the following:
  - How you lead, your encouragement and your undivided presence, will be your greatest gift.
  - You may have other helpers joining you, including older children. Make sure they understand the Sessions ahead of time and what you expect from them. This will ensure a better experience for all.
  - You will be assigned a group of children to journey with. You will be the glue that holds the small group together. Your leadership will be important as you are called to help facilitate conversations, share the passion you have for your faith, and witness through your own life experiences with the children.

## **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 that facilitator and companions become friendly with the families from the moment they arrive. It includes asking good questions, being vulnerable, and helping everyone feel seen.

## CLAIM - MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

- 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 parents 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.

# SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

Meeting	Theme	Activity
Parent/ Family Meeting 1	Parents naming rights and responsibility to be the primary educators in the faith.	I have called you by name print.
Parent/ Family Meeting 2	Faith is passed down from one generation to the next. We are part of a spiritual family tree with deep roots.	Spiritual Family Tree Letters to Godparents
Godparent Meeting	A reflection for godparents and an encouragement on how to best live out their special role.	Letter to Godchild
Parent/ Family Meeting 3	The natural and supernatural signification of water throughout salvation history and in our lives today.	Wash Cloth
Parent/ Family Meeting 4	Dive into the Explanatory Rites and how sacramentals keep us open to grace.	Create Baptismal Candle
Parent/ Family Meeting 5	A resource to help lead a prayer experience at the Baptism celebration.	Baptism Party Prayer Experience.



## FAMILY FOLLOW THROUGHS

Time with family is precious. Following through with this family experience tells your child this is important. With your child, please complete the following tasks after each Meeting to turn in.

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**Parent/Family Meeting 1:** Email in a few words the image of God you want to share with your child.

**Parent/Family Meeting 2:** Email in sentence or more telling why you chose the godparent(s) for your child.

**Parent/Family Meeting 3:** Email in a sentence or more something new to you or inspiring from this Meeting.

**Parent/Family Meeting 4:** Email a photo of the Baptismal candle along with any other religious items you might have in your home.

**Parent/Family Meeting 5:** Email/Submit in a sentence or more telling about someone who shared their faith with you.



# *Certificate of Completion*

This certificate is to verify that the parents and/or godparents listed below have successfully completed the *Claim* baptismal preparation process.

*Parents*

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*Godparents*

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*Certified by*

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*Signature*

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*Printed Name*

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*Title*

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*Date*

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*Church*

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*(Arch)Diocese*



Faith and Family Life  
Catholic Ministries