

ROOT

Leader Guide

Faith and Family Life
Catholic Ministries

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AN INVITATION

You have been invited to accompany others as they grow deep roots of faith grounded in the essential beliefs of the Church. Whether we are new to the faith or has been practicing for some time, we all can grow deeper roots and glean new insights from the richness of our Tradition.

Root is a foundational catechetical experience focusing on the Creed. Over the course of 6 self-led Mini-Series at-home, and/or 6 Family Meetings at-home, and 7 Sessions at-church, participants will grow into a deeper understanding of our faith as they are led through the contents of the first part of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Root includes 2 different content tracks: adults and families. The adult content can be utilized in adult faith formation, to build accompaniment teams, in the Marriage catechumenate, or with parents of early childhood aged children (0-5). The family track includes integrated age-appropriate content for parents, adolescence (14-18), pre-adolescence (11-13), and middle childhood (6-10) that are designed to be used together.

> *Initiatory catechesis is at the service of the profession of faith. Those who have already met Jesus Christ feel the growing desire to get to know him more intimately, expressing a first inclination toward the Gospel. In the Christian community catechesis, together with the liturgical ceremonies, works of charity, and experience of fraternity, "initiates them in knowledge of faith and apprenticeship in the Christian life, thereby promoting a spiritual journey which brings about 'a progressive change in outlook and morals' (AG 13)". (Directory for Catechesis 34)*

A FEW TIPS

- By reading and experiencing the content yourself, you will be best equipped to accompany this program. We recommend first becoming familiar with the at-home and at-church material before implementing it.
- Participants can be placed into small groups of 3-5 families or 6-7 individuals to share this journey with. Companions can help weave together these small groups into a small faith community.
- *Root* At-Church Sessions bring participants together to share their experiences from the Mini-Series and/or Family Meetings and to be led deeper into the mystery.
- 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.

ROOT FOR ADULTS

Root for Adults is a foundational catechetical experience designed to purify faith. Through short reflections, adults will get to know the Trinity and the essential teachings of our faith contained in the Creed. They will deepen their understanding of what we believe and take their place in salvation history.

AT-HOME CONTENT

Root Book contains 6 self-led Mini-series, of 5-6 (15 minute) Modules each. Each Module includes a reflection on a short section of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, reflection questions, practical suggestions, and concludes with a prayer. An audio recording of the content is also available through a QR code or URL found on the inside cover of the book.

AT-CHURCH CONTENT

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

- Break open the Mini-Series of reflections they have been working on at-home.
- To meet and hear from other adults on a similar journey. There is wisdom in any room of adults!
- 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.

This resource has been provided to support you in facilitating Sessions held at-church throughout the *Root* experience. There is plenty of content to fill a 1.5 hour time frame. The Time is Holy Session is used to introduce Root and the rhythm of the process. The sequence then follows this pattern: Mini-Series at-home and then a Session at-church. For example, after Time is Holy adults would be invited to reflect on Mini-Series 1 from the Root Book at-home, then come to Session 1 at-church. This same pattern

occurs 5 more times. The at-home material covers the entire content of Part 1 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the at-church content covers salvation history.

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 a mood in the room; candles, music, dimming the lights, etc. We feel it is critical to set holy spaces to lead adults 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. Covering tables with a nice linen tablecloth and placing a beautiful centerpiece, along with your attention to other details tells everyone this is important, we prepared for you!

We realize adults are in all different places and stages in their own faith journeys. We have written Sessions we feel best take into account today's adults. The majority of the adults 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. It is our hope that these Sessions meet them where they are at and slowly lead them into something more. Do not be discouraged if some of the participants struggle to finish the reading before the Session, as they hear the fruit from those who have it will progressively inspire them to go back and read it for themselves. Feel free to scale the material up or down. It is most important that participants leave with a positive experience of Church and community, feeling like they have a place in it.

ACCOMPANIMENT TEAM NEEDS

Facilitator:

- Choosing a facilitator to lead your Sessions as an MC from the front is an important decision. There will be other voices like witnesses, but it is necessary to have a central person to be the stabilizing and guiding voice in the group. 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. Having the entire group come together as a unit, as a family, will help adults continue to seek these experiences out with each other after the Sessions end.

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 prior to the start of Seek. 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. Invest in time with your companions. 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 adults 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 team. 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. Adults can decide to "pass."
    - Make sure all participants 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 the participants, they will need to model that in their own sharing. The group will usually follow their lead.
    - Make sure companions 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 the responses and be ready to ask follow up questions that help expand the participant's answers. It is important that they remember information discussed and use it to check in with the participants in future Sessions.
    - Each group sharing time is preempted by a reflection time for processing. This should help the adults 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 facilitator or pastor.

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 adults 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 adults before they ever begin. It includes being "real" through sharing, vulnerability, and laughter from the minute your participants enter.

- 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 participants to lean into the conversation, like a great dinner party. Take the time to set the room in advance, so that adults 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 adults and let them loose to work their magic.

Intercessors:

- Having intentional intercessors who are praying for your people 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 adults today 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 adults of the parish each day.

ROOT FOR PARENTS

Root for Parents is a foundational catechetical experience designed to meet the fast paced lives of parents. Through short reflections, parents will get to know the Trinity and the essential teachings of our faith contained in the Creed. They will deepen their understanding of what we believe and be empowered to share faith with their families. The *Root* for Parents content is designed to work with any combination of the middle childhood, pre-adolescence, or adolescence content.

AT-HOME CONTENT

Root Book contains 6 self-led Mini-series, of 5-6 (15 minute) Modules each. Each Module includes a reflection on a short section of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, reflection questions, practical suggestions, and concludes with a prayer. An audio recording of the content is also available through a QR code or URL found on the inside cover of the book.

AT-CHURCH CONTENT

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

- Break open the Mini-Series of reflections they have been working on at-home.
- Find out what is going well and what they are struggling with in the *Root* Box Family Meetings.
- To prepare them for the next Family Meeting or guided discussion with their teen with any tips, inspiration, or information that will support them.
- 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.

This resource has been provided to support you in facilitating Sessions held at-church throughout the *Root* experience for the whole family that are designed to complement

and enhance the at-home content. The Sessions include different content for parents, middle childhood (6-10), pre-adolescence (11-13), and adolescence (14-18). They are sold separately to allow you to use the content combination that best fits your situation. Parents and their children will be separated for the first part of each Session. Each Session ends with a closing prayer for the whole family together that can be used with families that have children in middle childhood (6-10) or pre-adolescence (11-13). If families have children (6-13) and also adolescence (14-18), have the adolescence join for the closing prayers for the whole family. A closing discussion and prayer is also available when used with parents and adolescence only. There is plenty of content to fill a 1-1.5 hour time frame.

The Time is Holy Session is used to introduce *Root* and the rhythm of the process. The sequence then follows this pattern: Mini-Series at-home, Session at-church, and Family Meeting at-home if using the box. For example, after Time is Holy parents/ adolescence would be invited to reflect on Mini-Series 1 from the *Root* Book at-home, then the whole family would come to Session 1 at-church, and then they would do Family Meeting 1 from the Root Box at-home. This same pattern occurs 5 more times.

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 a mood in the room; candles, music, dimming the lights 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. For the closing discussion and prayer with parents and teens you will need a space where they can sit together. We recommend using your church, but if this is not possible you may need to move to a difference space for these closing experiences or have additional seating available in your space. Your attention to detail tells everyone this is important, we prepared for you!

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've been told they have to, and probably aren't 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. Do not be discouraged if some of the parents struggle to finish the reading before the Session, as they hear the fruit from

those who have it will progressively inspire them to go back and read it for themselves. 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 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.

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 strongly suggested 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 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.

ROOT FOR ADOLESCENCE

Root for Adolescence is a foundational catechetical experience designed for high school aged teens (14-18). Through short reflections, teens will get to know the Trinity and the essential teachings of our faith contained in the Creed. They will deepen their understanding of what we believe and be empowered to share faith with their families.

AT-HOME CONTENT

Root Book contains 6 self-led Mini-series, of 5-6 (15 minute) Modules each. Each Module includes a reflection on a short section of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, reflection questions, practical suggestions, and concludes with a prayer. An audio recording of the content is also available through a QR code or URL found on the inside cover of the book.

AT-CHURCH CONTENT

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

- Break open the Mini-Series of reflections they have been working on independently.
- Find out what is going well and what they are struggling with.
- To prepare them for a conversation with their parents with inspiration and information that will support them.
- To meet and hear from other teens on a similar journey. There is wisdom in any room of teens!
- 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.

This resource has been provided to support you in facilitating Sessions held at-church throughout the *Root* experience for teens that are designed to complement and enhance

the at-home content. The Sessions include content designed for adolescence (14-18). Parents and teens will be separated for the first part of each Session. A closing discussion and prayer is available when used with parents and adolescents only. If families have children (6-13) and also adolescents (14-18), have the adolescents join for the closing prayers for the whole family which can be found in the *Root* for Parents At-Church Content. There is plenty of content to fill a 1-1.5 hour time frame.

The Time is Holy Session is used to introduce *Root* and the rhythm of the process. The sequence then follows this pattern: Mini-Series at-home and Session at-church. For example, after Time is Holy parents/adolescence would be invited to reflect on Mini-Series 1 from the *Root* Book at-home, then the whole family would come to Session 1 at-church. This same pattern occurs 5 more times.

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 a mood in the room; candles, music, dimming the lights etc. We feel it is critical to set holy spaces to lead teens 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. For the closing discussion and prayer with parents and teens you will need a space where they can sit together. We recommend using your church, but if this is not possible you may need to move to a difference space for these closing experiences or have additional seating available in your space. Your attention to detail tells everyone this is important, we prepared for you!

You can begin each Session with an icebreaker game that works with your community. We realize teens are in different places and stages in their own faith journeys. We have written Sessions we feel best take into account today's teens. The majority of the teens we encounter have very little theological background, but have the wisdom of their own lives to reflect on. We have found that when we give them helpful prompts and time to process, they do very well in sharing with each other. It is our hope that these Sessions meet families where they are at and slowly lead them into something more. Do not be discouraged if some of the teens struggle to finish the reading before the Session, as they hear the fruit from those who have it will progressively inspire them to go back and read it for themselves. Feel free to scale the material up or down. It is most important that teens 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 your family 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.

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 strongly suggested 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. Teens can decide to “pass.”
  - Make sure all teens 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 teens, 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 teen responses, and be ready to ask follow up questions that help expand the teen'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 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 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 teens 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.

ROOT FOR PRE-ADOLESCENCE

Root for Pre-Adolescence is a foundational catechetical experience designed for junior high school aged children (11-13). Children will get to know the Trinity and the essential teachings of our faith contained in the Creed. They will deepen their understanding of what we believe through hands-on activities and meaningful conversations.

AT-HOME CONTENT

Root Box contains 1 Parent Guide and 6 Family Meetings. Each Family Meeting includes: a gathering ritual, opening prayer, check-in, experiential activity, teaching, and closing prayer. The gather includes leading the family in prayer by speaking aloud a statement of who they are in relationship with God. This gathering ritual will help provide a regular rhythm to begin the Family Meetings. Rituals are meaningful moments that, when continually shared, help to unite a family. As families gather, God fills the space around them and within them. The check-in is meant to get the conversation started between family members. The question is loosely based on the theme, and is one that is easy to answer. The activity provided is meant to teach the children through a fun and interactive experience. A teaching is also provided that coincides with the activity. Parents are given the language to teach an essential part of the catechesis related to the theme. Children remember what they "do" and parents remember what they "teach." To end each Family Meeting, a prayer is included to be read by a member of the family.

Each family meeting is designed to take 20-40 minutes. We have chosen one aspect from the parent Mini-Series to focus on for each Family Meeting. These six Family Meetings are meant to be conversation starters and seeds that we pray grow day to day as a family journeys in faith.

AT-CHURCH CONTENT

It is important to have jr. high school aged children gathered periodically throughout the *Root* 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.

This resource has been provided to support you in facilitating Sessions held at-church throughout the *Root* experience for the whole family that are designed to complement and enhance the at-home content. These Sessions include content designed for pre-adolescence (11-14). 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.

The Time is Holy Session is used to introduce *Root* and the rhythm of the process. The sequence then follows this pattern: Mini-Series at-home, Session at-church, and Family Meeting at-home. For example, after Time is Holy parents would be invited to reflect on Mini-Series 1 from the *Root* Book at-home, then the whole family would come to Session 1 at-church, and then they would do Family Meeting 1 from the *Root* Box at-home. This same pattern occurs 5 more times.

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 includes a gather, check-in, activity, and teaching. There will also be other games and crafts 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 *Root* 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. You can begin each Session with an icebreaker game that works with your community. We realize pre-adolescents are in different places and stages in their own faith journeys. We have written Sessions we feel best take into account today's pre-adolescents. The majority of the pre-adolescents we encounter have very little theological background, but we have found that when we give them helpful prompts and time to process, they do very well in sharing with each other. Due to maturity differences at this time it may be helpful to break the small groups up by sex. It is our hope that these Sessions meet families where they are at and slowly lead them into something more. 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 your family 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.

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 strongly suggested 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.
- Make sure all children 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 children, 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 teen responses, and be ready to ask follow up questions that help expand the teen'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 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 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 children to lean into the conversation. 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.

ROOT FOR MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

Root for Middle Childhood is a foundational catechetical experience designed for elementary school aged children (6-10). Children will get to know the Trinity and the essential teachings of our faith contained in the Creed. They will deepen their understanding of what we believe through hands-on activities and meaningful conversations.

AT-HOME CONTENT

Root Box contains 1 Parent Guide and 6 Family Meetings. Each Family Meeting includes: a gathering ritual, opening prayer, check-in, experiential activity, teaching, and closing prayer. The gather includes leading the family in prayer by speaking aloud a statement of who they are in relationship with God. This gathering ritual will help provide a regular rhythm to begin the Family Meetings. Rituals are meaningful moments that, when continually shared, help to unite a family. As families gather, God fills the space around them and within them. The check-in is meant to get the conversation started between family members. The question is loosely based on the theme, and is one that is easy to answer. The activity provided is meant to teach the children through a fun and interactive experience. A teaching is also provided that coincides with the activity. Parents are given the language to teach an essential part of the catechesis related to the theme. Children remember what they "do" and parents remember what they "teach." To end each Family Meeting, a prayer is included to be read by a member of the family.

Each family meeting is designed to take 20-40 minutes. We have chosen one aspect from the parent Mini-Series to focus on for each Family Meeting. These six Family Meetings are meant to be conversation starters and seeds that we pray grow day to day as a family journeys in faith.

AT-CHURCH CONTENT

It is important to have children gathered periodically throughout the *Root* 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.

This resource has been provided to support you in facilitating Sessions held at-church throughout the *Root* experience for the whole family that are designed to complement and enhance the at-home content. Theses 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.

The Time is Holy Session is used to introduce *Root* and the rhythm of the process. The sequence then follows this pattern: Mini-Series at-home, Session at-church, and Family Meeting at-home. For example, after Time is Holy parents would be invited to reflect on Mini-Series 1 from the *Root* Book at-home, then the whole family would come to Session 1 at-church, and then they would do Family Meeting 1 from the *Root* Box at-home. This same pattern occurs 5 more times.

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 *Root* Box. We have included a Saint for each of the Sessions. There is a short explanation tying them to

the lesson. Children love to hear about the lives of these incredible examples. A Saint coloring sheet PDF is provided as well. You may choose to have the children color these during the Session, or they could be sent home depending on timing. It is good to tell the stories of our holy heroes as they connect to different parts of our faith story. 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.
- 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.

ROOT BOX
SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

Family Meeting	Theme	Activity
1	God knows us by name and wants to be known by us. We get to know him through the words and actions of revelation.	God rock with names or initials.
2	God is light. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.	Counting all the light sources and shining of flashlight.
3	Jesus grew up in a family just like us. He wants to be close to us everyday.	Smell test with printed scents.
4	Jesus saves us through the power of the cross. Love equals sacrifice.	Tying and untying knots.
5	God gives us his Spirit to continue to be by our side. His power is given through the Sacraments.	Olive oil on skin.
6	We are made to spend eternity with God. God helps us with the race.	Follow the Leader.

ROOT BOX

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 Family Meeting.

Family Meeting 1: Email a picture of your rock with all your names or initials on it.

Family Meeting 2: Email the number of light sources was your family able to count.

Family Meeting 3: Email some of your favorite smells.

Family Meeting 4: Email a picture of your string with its untangled knots.

Family Meeting 5: Email the places you saw God today.

Family Meeting 6: Email what the leader did to tire your family out.