



Leader Guide



Faith and Family Life
Catholic Ministries

AN INVITATION

You have been invited to accompany families as they grow in the habits and practices of discipleship. When Jesus was living out his ministry here on earth, he spent time walking throughout various towns and villages. He would share his message as he interacted with the people there. Then he would move on to another town. He took his disciples with him as they were being prepared to be sent out on their own missions. The disciples followed Jesus so closely, as he walked along dusty roads, that they would eventually be covered in the dust of their teacher. That is what discipleship looks like. As students of Jesus, this resource is meant to teach, encourage, and challenge families to take concrete steps to follow after him as they are sent out everyday to classrooms, sports fields, work places, living rooms, and more - where they become witnesses for others. Prepare to be covered in the dust of Jesus!

The Lord, after his death and resurrection, gave the Holy Spirit to fulfill the work of salvation and sent the disciples to continue his mission in the world. From the missionary mandate of the Risen One emerge the words which pertain to evangelization, intimately connected to one another: "proclaim" (Mk 16:15); "make disciples, baptizing and teaching" (Mt 28:19-20), "you shall be witnesses" (Acts 1:8), "do this in remembrance of me" (Lk 22:19), "that you love one another" (Jn 15:12). In this way the characteristics of a dynamic of proclamation take shape, in which there is a close connection between the recognition of God's action in the heart of every person, the primacy of the Holy Spirit, and the universal openness to every person. Evangelization is therefore a reality that is "rich, complex and dynamic," and in its development incorporates various possibilities: witness and proclamation, word and sacrament, inner change and social transformation. All of these actions are complementary and enrich one another. The Church continues to carry out this task with an immense variety of experiences of proclamation, continually urged on by the Holy Spirit. (DC 16)

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.
- Families can be placed in small groups of 3-4 families to share this journey with. Families can learn from each other as they recount their Family Meeting experiences. Companion Families can weave together these individual families into a small church community.
- *Sent* is designed to be led at-home, and can be accompanied by the At-Church Content. The At-Church Content includes 4 Sessions for parents and children

together. If you are introducing families to ongoing formation resources for the first time, be sure to begin with the Blend Session.

- Check in with families regularly using our Family Follow Through system available on Martha or as a PDF found at the end of this guide. This helps with accountability. You can also share photos from the Family Follow Throughs in your newsletter, emails, or bulletin boards.

AT-HOME CONTENT

Over 16 Family Meetings, families will be looking at different aspects of taking a journey, adventure, or trip. Each Family Meeting will begin with a gathering ritual. They will then use the check-in to get the conversation started and track the habit practiced from the previous Family Meeting. Next they will share the teaching which highlights a particular habit or practice of discipleship. The activity will then invite them to travel to another part of the world to hear about the life of a saint who lived this out. Their stories are wonderful examples for us. Finally, they will discuss ways their family can commit to living out the habit or practice and then close in prayer together. Each Family Meeting is designed to take an average of 30-40 minutes.

For the gathering ritual families will participate in a prayer practice known as *Lectio Divina*. It involves a slow deliberate reading of a Scripture passage, and some time in silence to listen for God's voice present through his word. They will begin simply by listening in their first few Family Meetings, then understanding, then praying, and finally considering some type of personal response as they become more familiar with this quiet time. This gathering ritual will help provide a regular rhythm to begin Family Meetings. If they have younger children, parents can invite them to draw what they are hearing.

An important part of this resource is the development of the habits and practices that will happen between each Family Meeting. There are suggestions within each Family Meeting to help parents talk about concrete ways their family can live as disciples. There are also posters included in the box to use in their home as a reminder to follow Jesus. The posters will help families keep track of the particular ways they will try to live out the habit or practice from each Family Meeting. Every family member will receive a passport to track their practices. At the check-in, they will review together the ways they have lived out the previous habit or practice and then stamp the corresponding page in the passport. This also is a perfect time to affirm one another in ways they have noticed the habit or practice being lived out. Parents are invited to be on the lookout outside of Family Meeting times to affirm when their children are living out a habit or practice of discipleship by stamping their passports.

Sprinkled throughout the Family Meetings are questions for families to discuss together. Conversations are one way knowledge gets integrated into our lives. Parents are able to hear the thoughts, feelings, and questions their children may have as they journey together to become more like Jesus. There are more than enough questions, so if one doesn't seem to encourage conversation, parents can move on to the next.

Each Family Meeting will end with a closing prayer that reflects on the habit or practice presented and an opportunity to offer their family to God. Parents are invited to consider placing their hand on each child's head or shoulder while they pray together. The warm touch of a parent can be very reassuring and can also serve as a sign of God's love for each of us.

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

Family Meeting	Theme	Activity	Values Taught
1	Discipleship	Put names on your passports, use the "I am a disciple" stamp, hang posters somewhere visible	Hearing God's voice, the journey to Heaven is lifelong, good and holy habits, the example of the saint
2	Disciples Belong	Learn about St. John Paul II, add 2-3 concrete ways to practice the habit of belonging to the poster	Identity as a member of God's family, effects of Baptism, repentance, sharing faith with others
3	Disciples Pray	Learn about St. Anthony of the Desert, add 2-3 concrete ways to practice the habit of prayer to the poster	The meaning of prayer, taking daily time for prayer, the Our Father, dryness in prayer, perseverance in prayer

4	Disciples Study	Learn about St. Jerome, add 2-3 concrete ways to practice the habit of study to the poster	Learning about God, the Bible, the Catechism, sharing the fruit of learning with others
5	Disciples Worship	Learn about St. Basil, add 2-3 concrete ways to practice the habit of worship to the poster.	The Sacraments, The Eucharist, Mass, responding to God's love, God's indwelling, heavenly worship
6	Disciples Serve	Learn about St. Damien of Molokai, add 2-3 concrete ways to practice the habit of service to the poster	Service to the poor, connection to the human family, compassion, human dignity, meaning of neighbor, the early Church
7	Disciples Give	Learn about St. Frances Cabrini, add 2-3 concrete ways to practice the habit of giving to the poster	Care for God's creation, stewardship, using time, talent, and treasure
8	Disciples Love	Learn about St. José Sánchez del Río, add 2-3 concrete ways to practice the habit of loving to the poster	Sacrifice, choosing to love others, God is love, putting others first
9	Disciples Discern	Learn about St. Ignatius of Loyola, add 2-3 concrete ways to practice discernment to the poster.	Prayer as conversation with God, discernment, true happiness is found only in God
10	Disciples Make Good Decisions	Learn about St. Mariana of Jesus, add 2-3 concrete ways to practice making good decisions	Virtue, morality of an act, conscience, intention, inherently evil acts

11	Holy Orders	Learn about St. Andrew Kim Taegon, add 2-3 concrete ways to support the clergy	Leadership, the Sacraments of Initiation, the Sacraments at the service of communion, mission, Holy Orders, vocational discernment
12	Marriage	Learn about Saints Priscilla and Aquila, add 2-3 concrete ways to support married couples or marriage	Marriage as a sign of God's love, Marriage is ordered towards the good of the spouses and to children, holiness and sanctification through Marriage, parents are co-creators with God, the domestic church, not all families look the same, the Holy Family
13	Disciples Are Sent	Learn about St. Thérèse, add 2-3 concrete ways to live out the mission of evangelization to the poster	Prayer leads to action, mission, the Great Commission, evangelization, the presence of the Holy Spirit, community
14	Disciples Are Friends	Learn about St. Aelred of Rievaulx, add 2-3 concrete ways to practice being a good friend to the poster	Friendship, investing in relationships, Jesus' example, listening, patience
15	Disciples Witness	Learn about St. Augustine, add 2-3 concrete ways to practice being a witness to the poster	Sharing about faith, credible witness, encounter, knowing Jesus as a friend
16	Disciples Invite	Learn about St. Francis Xavier, add 2-3 concrete ways to practice inviting others to be disciples to the poster	Confidence in the Holy Spirit, trust in God, Jesus makes disciples - not us, invitation to faith, sharing the Gospel

AT-CHURCH CONTENT

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

- Find out what is going well and what families are struggling with in the Family Meetings.
- To encourage, deepen, and support their experience of the Family Meetings 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 4 Sessions held at-church throughout the *Sent* experience. 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. Session 1 is designed to be used between Family Meeting 4 and 5. Session 2 is designed to be used between Family Meeting 8 and 9. Session 3 is designed to be used between Family Meeting 12 and 13. Session 4 is designed to be used after Family Meeting 16. If you are introducing families to ongoing formation resources for the first time, be sure to begin with the Blend Session available before Session 1. This experience will help provide a framework for both the purpose and direction of this stage of formation.

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. 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.

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, 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 as disciples.



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 to turn in.

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Family Meeting 1: Email a picture of where you placed your posters.

Family Meeting 2: Email a picture of the 2-3 concrete ways your family will practice the habit of belonging you added to the poster.

Family Meeting 3: Email a picture of the 2-3 concrete ways your family will practice the habit of prayer you added to the poster.

Family Meeting 4: Email a picture of the 2-3 concrete ways your family will practice the habit of study you added to the poster.

Family Meeting 5: Email a picture of the 2-3 concrete ways your family will practice the habit of worship you added to the poster.

Family Meeting 6: Email a picture of the 2-3 concrete ways your family will practice the habit of service you added to the poster.

Family Meeting 7: Email a picture of the 2-3 concrete ways your family will practice the habit of giving you added to the poster.

Family Meeting 8: Email a picture of the 2-3 concrete ways your family will practice the habit of loving you added to the poster.

Family Meeting 9: Email a picture of the 2-3 concrete ways your family will practice discernment you added to the poster.

Family Meeting 10: Email a picture of the 2-3 concrete ways your family will practice making good decisions you added to the poster.

Family Meeting 11: Email a picture of the 2-3 concrete ways your family will practice supporting the clergy you added to the poster.

Family Meeting 12: Email a picture of the 2-3 concrete ways your family will practice supporting married couples.

Family Meeting 13: Email a picture of the 2-3 concrete ways your family will practice living out the mission of evangelization you added to the poster.

Family Meeting 14: Email a picture of the 2-3 concrete ways your family will practice being a good friend you added to the poster.

Family Meeting 15: Email a picture of the 2-3 concrete ways your family will practice being a witness you added to the poster.

Family Meeting 16: Email a picture of the 2-3 concrete ways your family will practice inviting others to be disciples you added to the poster.