



Leader Guide



Faith and Family Life
Catholic Ministries

AN INVITATION

You have been invited to accompany families as they grow in the practice of traditional monthly devotions. Devotion is presented as 12 supplemental at-church experiences, in which families will experience 12 popular monthly devotions. They will also be creating their own personalized home devotional guide to use throughout the year. Over time, families will naturally integrate these prayerful practices into the rhythm of their daily lives, deepening their faith together at home and further connecting them to the parish. The at-church Sessions are focused on building relationships and prayerful habits around these common devotional practices. Through this experience, families are further integrated into the communal and spiritual life of their parish.

Popular piety celebrates the mysteries of the life of Jesus Christ, above all his passion, venerates with tenderness the Mother of God, the martyrs and saints and prays for the deceased. It is expressed through the veneration of relics, visits to shrines, pilgrimages, processions, the via crucis, religious dances, the rosary, medals, and other exercises of individual, family, and community piety. This, “in the secularized environment in which our peoples live, continues to be a grandiose confession of the living God who acts in history, and a channel of transmission of the faith,” almost constituting a reserve of faith and hope for a society that is losing its reference to God. In this sense popular piety, “a true expression of the spontaneous missionary activity of the people of God” in which “the Holy Spirit is the principal agent,” is “a locus theologicus which demands our attention, especially at a time when we are looking to the new evangelization.” (DC 338)

Catechesis is to take care above all to enhance the evangelizing power of the expressions of popular piety, integrating them into and promoting them in its process of formation and allowing itself to be inspired by the ceremonies and symbols of the people in terms of the keeping of the faith and its transmission from one generation to another. In this sense, many practices of popular piety are a trail already blazed for catechesis. Moreover, catechesis is to seek to trace some of the manifestations of popular piety back to their evangelical, Trinitarian, Christological, and ecclesial roots, purifying them of deformations or erroneous attitudes and turning them into opportunities for a new dedication to the Christian life. Interpreting with wisdom the essential elements of devotional practices and recognizing their valuable aspects, catechesis shows their link with Scripture and the liturgy, especially with the Sunday Eucharist, in such a way that these may lead to more heartfelt membership in the Church, an authentic everyday witness, and genuine charity toward the poor. (DC 340)

A FEW TIPS

- By reading and experiencing the content yourself, you will be best equipped to accompany families through this resource. We recommend first becoming familiar with the material, before implementing it.
- Families can be placed in small groups of 2-4 families at a table. Families can learn from each other as they share their experiences. Companion Families can weave together these individual families into a small church community.
- Devotion is designed to be led at-church, with the practice of the devotion continuing into the life of the home. The At-Church Content includes 12 Sessions for parents and children to experience together. There is an Intro Add-On that should be used to introduce the experience in whichever month you will be beginning.

AT-CHURCH CONTENT

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

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

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

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

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

ACCOMPANIMENT TEAM NEEDS

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

Facilitator:

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

Companion Families:

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

Hospitality:

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

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

Intercessors:

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