

Adult Faith Formation: From Information to Transformation, From Program to Process



LIFELONG CATHOLIC LEARNING

DIOCESE OF GREEN BAY

Adult Faith Formation

Adult faith formation must be situated at the center of the Church's educational mission rather than relegated to the periphery as it has been for many years. "Because of its importance and because all other forms of catechesis are oriented in some way to it, catechesis of adults must have priority at all levels of the Church"
(NCD #188)

Questions, Comments, Thoughts?

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Schedule of Mini Presentations:

Julianne Stanz- The Centrality of Adult Faith Formation

Patti Christensen- The Top 10 Essentials for Adult Faith Formation

Sr. Patricia Clement/Jerry Berg- From Small to Large: Facilitation Tips and Tricks

Carol Jensen- Out of the Ordinary

A note about the panelists:

Julianne Stanz is the Director of Adult Faith Formation for the Diocese of Green Bay and serves as a consultant to the USCCB committee on Catechesis and Evangelization. Julianne graduated with a degree in History, a degree in Religious Studies and a Master's in Theology and Education from Mater Dei College, Maynooth University, and Dublin City University in Ireland and is currently working on her Ph.D. She is married to Wayne and they have two small children.

Carol Jensen is Pastoral Minister for Adult and Young Adult Faith Formation and has worked in the Diocese of Green Bay for more than 35 years as a teacher in Catholic Schools, catechist, DRE, Pastoral Minister and Campus Minister. She has Bachelor and Master's Degrees from U.W.-Oshkosh in education and counseling and a Master's Degree in Pastoral Ministry from St. Mary's University of Minnesota. cjensen@stmaryparish.org

Patti Christensen is Pastoral Associate at St. Jude the Apostle Parish in Oshkosh. Previously, Patti worked for the Diocese of Green Bay as the Director of Spirituality and Evangelization and in the area of Family Ministry and Marriage Preparation. Patti earned her MA in Pastoral Studies from St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee in 1994 and has twenty five years of experience in church ministry. She is passionate about her love of God and wants to share it with you! pchristensen@stjudeoshkosh.org

Sister Patricia Clement, CSJ holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from Fontbonne College, a Master's Degree in Chemistry from Notre Dame University and a Masters in Administration from the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. She has been involved in education for thirty eight years and has presented at numerous workshops and conferences on topics such as alcoholism, suicide, substance abuse, depression and Project Rachel. She currently serves as the Pastoral Associate with responsibility for Adult Faith Formation at the Quad-Parishes of Green Bay, WI. pclement@allofuswestgb.org

Jerry Berg is married to his wife Marie for 39 years and they have 2 children and 2 grandsons. Jerry is a retired Environmental Scientist and Engineer who spent the last 5 years of his career, serving as a facilitator, helping clients and teams within his company collaboratively create solutions for improved business practices. He is currently a volunteer with St. John the Baptist in Howard working with their adult faith formation program and in the 3rd phase of the Emmaus program with the Diocese. gerald.berg@att.net

The Centrality of Adult Faith Formation



The goal of adult faith formation to 'form adults who actively cultivate a lively baptismal and Eucharistic spirituality with a powerful sense of mission and apostolate. Nourished by word, sacrament and communal life, they will witness and share the Gospel in their homes, neighborhoods, places of work and centers of culture' (OHWB # 5)

All are called to make a specific and enthusiastic commitment to adult faith formation. While affirming and honoring adult catechesis efforts that have been made in the past the Diocese of Green Bay is energetically committed to making adult faith formation the foundation of catechesis in the parish. As foundational it will emphasize that as members of a parish community plan, celebrate, preach, serve, teach, witness, welcome, gather, socialize and pray together they must first keep in mind the formation of the adult members of the parish community.

Parish as the Primary Experience of Church

The parish is the primary experience of Church for many people. It is without a doubt the "most important locus in which the Christian community is formed and expressed" (GDC no. 257, cf.no. 158). However, for those Catholics who do not attend Church regularly or do not have a strong parish connection we are challenged to find ways to reach them effectively. Thus, there is a direct relationship between the vitality of the local parish and its ability to foster growth in discipleship among its adults. It is safe to say, **the more vital the faith life of the local parish, the more effective it will be in nurturing mature discipleship among its adult members.** It also follows that the more contact and involvement adults maintain with their parish the more likely it is that they will continue to grow in discipleship.

Our parishes are made up of adults in all stages of the journey of faith. When planning for adult faith formation we need to consider and design opportunities that will serve the needs and interests of the entire parish faith community. Though our message must be consistent, our efforts must be diverse, reflective of and responsive to felt need, and ever respectful of the experiences and hungers of our adult members. Adult faith formation should always reflect deeply on the content and tradition of the Catholic faith. Adult faith is clearly rooted in the life, teaching and mission of the Church.

*The goal of adult faith formation is a personal relationship to Christ
which informs every area of our daily living.*

Below are some of the characteristics of a lived faith in adults. Ask yourself - which areas are you engaged in actively and which areas may require your attention?

Characteristics of a lived faith in adult learners:

Frequent reading of the word of God, sacred writings of our tradition
and the official documents of the Church.

Involvement in the community life and mission of the Church.

Personal prayer.

Participation in the works of justice and service to the poor.

The fulfillment of our human obligations in family and society
through the active practice of love for God and neighbor.

(OHWB#16-18)

Growth in faith and the spiritual life ultimately depends upon the action of the Holy Spirit. However, in keeping with the theological principle that grace builds upon nature it is true that one's capacity for faith tends to develop in predictable stages; normally is an observable relationship between chronological age and the development of this capacity.

It must be noted that in attempting to foster mature discipleship among adults it is critical that we remember that adults themselves must assume responsibility for their growth. This responsibility is accepted with one's Baptism, which initiates one into a relationship with Jesus as his disciple. However, as stated above, this sense of responsibility and consequent motivation to participate in available programs and activities is closely tied to our stage in the life cycle and present stage of faith development. Recognize yourself in one or many of these stages? If so cultivating faith goals and attending programs that speak to your personal faith journey would be a beneficial step.



Patti's Top 10 Essentials for Adult Faith Formation



1. Pastor Support

WIN – WIN for the parish!

Pastor input on focus of programs, showcase Pastor's talents.

2. Money

Make AFF a line item in your parish budget! Cull the parish for AFF \$\$ supporters

Start small – GROW!

3. AFF Volunteers

Determine needs - Personally invite

Give recognition and build in perks

4. Programming

Where are the gaps? Ask people.

Talk to others and research programs – use Diocese!

Start with a guaranteed success

5. Advertising Blitz

Bulletin, posters, pamphlets, announcements, local TV ads, Compass, local newspaper, area parish bulletins, word of mouth, personal invites, email, Facebook, other social media, local coffeehouses, etc.

6. Day of the Event

Call ahead, organize and make lists, have your team in place early and stay to clean up.

7. Hospitality

Team approach - Personally greet everyone and make introductions

Create a warm environment - SMILE!!

8. Food

Add some surprise - Make people feel special! Leftovers to go!

9. Evaluate

Determine tool - Ask for feedback

LISTEN TO WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

10. Risk

Take chances on new experiences!

Step out of your comfort zone!

Make room for the Holy Spirit!

Suggestions for Large Group Discussions- Sr. Patricia Clement

Multiple Session Offerings

- 1) Make tent name cards big enough to see across the room (first/last name on one side and first name on the other). Collect after each class session and put out each class.
- 2) Prepare a call list with names and phone numbers in case a session has to be canceled because of weather, emergency, etc. I group in sets of 5. I call the first name and that person calls the next name. If you reach an answering machine, you are responsible for calling the next name, etc.
- 3) Provide basic hospitality: water, coffee (decaf and regular), hot water (tea, hot chocolate, apple cider). Some snack foods like peanuts, pretzels, etc.
- 4) Prepare a sign-up sheet for treats with dates of class sessions. My classes always enjoy cookies, bars, whatever. With the sign-up sheet people feel they are contributing and it never gets costly for any one person.

Discussion

- 1) Start with prayer---ask if there are any prayer requests, can ask if anyone wants to lead otherwise you lead.
- 2) I have handouts. If we are watching a DVD I preview the DVD and outline the speaker's presentation so the participants don't have to take notes—just highlight or jot down a thought that strikes them. I often have a second handout of things I want them to know from my preparation to lead the discussion.
- 3) Decide what focus you want. I always want two things: a) they have a clear understanding of whatever is being presented in the DVD or session and b) they can apply what they are learning in a fashion that moves them from head knowledge to heart experience.
- 4) Have your own questions ready that will start a discussion in case the participants are hesitant to start.

DVD/Discussion Classes

- 1) We've tried all possible combinations. The one my classes like best is to watch part of the DVD, discuss that part, break, watch the second part of the DVD, followed by the second discussion. My classes are usually 2 hours with a 5 - 10 minute break in the middle.
- 2) My classes like having everyone participate in the same discussion. The room is set up in a horseshoe style and extra places are set up in the middle if the class size demands more sitting space than the horseshoe can accommodate. We use tables and chairs rather than desks. Table space is appreciated since participants have snacks, handouts, bibles, and binders. Adults are more comfortable with chairs.



by Jerry Berg

1. Making everyone feel welcome and comfortable
 - a. Start with a prayer each session. You may ask for volunteers to bring in the next prayer. It helps to have a warm environment that can be created simply. An example would be an open bible, a burning candle, etc. A resource I use to find prayers is on the web. <http://www.catholicdoors.com/prayers/>
 - b. Self-Introductions
 - i. Normal background information as in whether they are married, single, family, years in the parish, etc. The material should be whatever they feel comfortable sharing.
 - ii. An icebreaker question (just one) for the first meeting only
 1. What is something about you that is not well known?
 2. What is your favorite hobby?
 3. What was the best thing that happened to you this week?
 4. What is the most outrageous thing you have done for God?
 5. Or your own non-threatening question....
 - c. For a new addition to the team, just do a quick round the room name sharing. Further introductions may take place informally at a break or after the meeting.
 - d. Set up group rules that everyone wants to live by and write them down (First meeting only). This needs to be their set of rules, however, some that need to be standard are:
 - i. What is said in the room stays in the room. This is critical for people to feel safe to speak.
 - ii. No one is forced to talk. On any given day or night, someone may just want to be present and listen.
 - iii. Respect everyone's opinion.
 1. No comments like; "Well that is wrong.", "I'd never do that.", "Where on earth did you learn that?" you get the idea.
 2. Watch the body language. Rolling eyes back can have the same impact as the comments.
 3. Don't interrupt.
 4. Listen when someone is talking
 - iv. Start on time and end on time. As the facilitator, you manage the clock.

2. Facilitating Do's.

- a. Welcome each individual, every meeting.
- b. Introduce the questions for discussion.
- c. Involve everyone
 - i. Quiet members need to be asked for their thoughts (Keep in mind those members that don't want to share, you can skip them, but reaffirm that they can add their thoughts if they want.)
 - ii. Talkers may need to be deflected at times. "Thank you Jerry, that is an interesting comment,. Marge what are your thoughts on....?"
 - iii. Watch the body language, you can often spot someone that is hungry to say something, but too shy to step in.
 - iv. When starting a new question, ask someone that is not engaged to lead the way. Even asking someone to read something will help them break the ice and engage in the discussion.
- d. If you are going to have a social time, put it at the end and make it optional.
- e. Manage the clock. Know where you are in the discussion and make adjustments to assure ending on time.
 - i. ID the key discussion questions. You could skip the minor ones.
 - ii. If it looks like it is going to run over, ask permission to go an extra 10 minutes. No More!
- f. If technical questions come up, that no one knows the answer to, taking a guess is a bad idea. Tell everyone you will try to get an answer for them the next time. Then you must follow up.
- g. Silence is OK for a little while. Don't jump in too quick.

3. Facilitating Do Not's

- a. Don't wait on people that are late. Start on time.
- b. Don't get engaged in the topic and forget you are facilitating.
- c. Don't over control the discussion. It may be better to let a discussion roll a little longer and drop a future question.
- d. You're not the boss, you're the facilitator. A servant leader!
- e. You're not an expert, don't try to answer the questions. Turn them back to the team.
- f. Don't discuss anyone outside of the room. Control the gossip.
- g. Don't repeatedly call on the same person to start the discussion.
- h. Don't allow sidebar conversations (should be one of the rules)
- i. Don't serve food or drink during the discussion. If you want a social atmosphere, do it after.

Adult Faith Formation – Out of the Ordinary Experiences

Carol Jensen

What kind of experiences help us to grow spiritually? Here are some possibilities outside of the traditional class:

Field Trips-

Allow us to make comparisons and contrasts - to receive new information, to ask questions, to enter into new spaces and have new experiences. Possibilities include:

Cathedral/ Museum/Diocesan Campus; St. Joseph Food Pantry St. Vincent de Paul; Churches of Other Denominations - Lutheran, Baptist, Episcopalian, Mormon, Islamic Society, Sikh Temple, Jewish Synagogue

Structured Witness Talks

Allow us to share our faith with others and enable us to tell the story of how God has been a part of our life.

- The Importance of Dads
- Finding Jesus in the 21st Century -Living my faith through my work and family.

Spiritual Direction/ Busy Person Retreat

Question from Growing an Engaged Church:

"In the last six months someone in my congregation/parish has talked to me about the progress of my spiritual growth."

Do you have a list of trained spiritual directors in your area?

Retreats - Parish, Community, Directed or Group Experiences at Local Retreat Houses

Do you have retreat brochures available? Do you offer parish retreat experiences?

Pilgrimages- Holy Land; Rome; Lourdes; Spain (walking the Camino)

Often involve experience, prayer and learning.

Has your parish or a local group sponsored one of these trips yet?

Are there more local places or shrines that would appeal to your parishioners?

Service Experiences - Milwaukee Soup Kitchens
Diocesan Appalachian Outreach
Fox Valley Mission Club
Visits to Elias Pina, Diocesan Mission in Dominican Republic
List of local service experiences for adults

Libraries – books, cd's, dvd's, videos, devotionals

Allow people of all ages to learn and grow at their own pace and choose the materials that fit their immediate needs. Do you have a space and a budget for this? Will you accept donations from parishioners? If you have parishioners who are looking for specific topics or ways to grow, having resources on hand allows you to help them answer questions or find what they're looking for.

Websites

Again, allow folks to explore at their own pace. It's important that we offer suggestions and talk with folks about screening sites and knowing who the author of a website and their credentials is.

Book Clubs/ Book Discussions-

Many of our parishioners belong to one or more book clubs, why not host one at your parish? Suggestions for Catholic Books can often be found in Catholic magazines and newspapers and can also be solicited from among your parishioners within the parameters you give.

FAITH
is not believing that God can
it is knowing that He will.

NOTES

