

How to Use RENEWING FAMILY FAITH

We Believe

We Celebrate

We Live

We Pray

Introduction

Where Do We Find Faith?

Often, when asked “where do we find faith?” we are tempted to look to texts. Perhaps especially to the official texts of the Church, such as the Creed, with its brief summaries of our principal beliefs as Christians; or to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [hereafter referred to as the *Catechism* or CCC], the official presentation of Catholic doctrines, a mini-encyclopedia of the fundamental contents of what Catholics believe.

In fact, these are just formulations of faith, and no matter how good these may be, faith does not actually lie in these formulations and statements. These seek to express a reality, a reality that we can touch only through faith itself.

In other words, faith is not to be found in books—no matter how good they may be. Faith is found in people. Our capacity as people, freely and willingly, to say “I believe” is one of the greatest and most significantly human things we can do. So part of the very essence of faith is that it is **personal**.

Right away, we come across one of the paradoxes of faith. It is personal; each of us has to say “I believe,” which makes it sound as if it is “my” faith. In fact, by saying “I believe,” I am identifying myself with the faith of the Church. Faith ultimately is a God-given gift that we receive through the Church when we are baptized into new life in Christ. Part of the very essence of faith is that it is **ecclesial**, it is shared, it is something I hold and cherish with everyone else who has been baptized.

The Importance of Faith Sharing

This is why faith sharing is so important: because it is true to the nature of faith as something personal, and it is true to the nature of faith as something that is shared and which ought to be shared.

That is why we offer the *RENEWING FAMILY FAITH* resource: it takes seriously the profound double reality of faith as essentially **personal** (it is found in people), and as essentially **ecclesial** (it is the faith of the Church which all the baptized share).

This resource is founded on Scripture and Tradition, and structured in the same way as the *Catechism*, the official compendium of Catholic teaching.

RENEWING FAMILY FAITH is divided into four series, corresponding to the fourfold structure of the *Catechism*:

- a series on what **we believe**
- a series on how our faith is something that **we celebrate**
- a series on how **we live** as Christians as a consequence of our faith
- a series on how **we pray**, how we develop our faith life spiritually

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Using *RENEWING FAMILY FAITH* as a Family

Basic principles

Faith is a lifelong journey, a quest for truth. There are some things that we are able to affirm confidently from a very young age, but that we come to appreciate more fully later in life. In our sharing, we need to respect this fact—that we all are on a faith journey and that we all travel at different speeds and may be at different stages when we share our faith within our families.

Some ideas

- The main section of each bulletin is a reflection on a theme related to a *Why Catholic?* session. The content of these reflections is designed to help you share with other members of your family some of what took place in your *Why Catholic?* group, remembering to respect the confidentiality of statements by members of your group. You may want to offer, in your own words, a summary of the main ideas that emerged from the *Why Catholic?* session. The reflection is also intended to give you enough information to launch into *Table Talk*.
- *Table Talk*, which appears on the back page of the *RENEWING FAMILY FAITH* bulletins, offers one or more questions to prompt a discussion with your family. These are not questions that have right or wrong answers; they are designed to elicit personal responses. Help the members of your family understand that different people can give different answers and that everyone's answer deserves respect.
- The *Parenting* section on the back page offers a variety of ideas related to the theme. Sometimes this section will suggest an activity; sometimes it will highlight useful information; sometimes it will raise questions that should be answered by parents as a couple.
- The *Family Activities* section on the back page presents things that can be done together, activities prompted by the theme to which you can commit as a family. Most of these are applicable, with adaptation, to most members of the family. Many of them are "hands on"; however, reflecting together is also an activity, as is praying together—both of which this section prompts from time to time.
- *Our Story*, which appears in the left-hand column on the front page of each bulletin, focuses on the faith-filled lives of individual women and men throughout the history of the Church. Their stories help us broaden our sense of family from our immediate parents, children, and siblings to the great family of the Church to which we belong by baptism.
- *Pondering the Word*, on the back page of the bulletin, is a short quote from Scripture followed by a question or short reflection. You can use this section to help your family grow in understanding that Scripture is not just text to be passively read but the living word of God that can and should nourish our faith lives.
- Also on the back page is a short quotation from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that is connected to the theme of the bulletin. If your children raise questions of faith prompted by the content of the bulletin, the *Catechism* and the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* are authoritative places to look for answers. However, because these books were written for adults in language that children likely would find difficult, you might want to turn first to the *Why Catholic?* faith-sharing book for help in crafting answers to your children's questions.