

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

RENEW International, 1232 George Street, Plainfield, NJ 07062

Tel: 908-769-5400 • Fax: 908-769-5660

www.WhyCatholic.org • www.renewintl.org

Using *RENEWING FAMILY FAITH* in Homily Preparation

Numerous pastors have remarked to us that taking part in a faith sharing on one of the Sunday readings has made it easier to develop their Sunday homilies. The *RENEWING FAMILY FAITH* bulletins cannot replace that experience, but since they were designed to stimulate faith sharing, they can serve as a tool in homily preparation.

Of course, the homily will focus on the readings of the day, and the theme you develop will flow from them. However, once you have decided on the central theme, it can be complemented by elements from *RENEWING FAMILY FAITH*.

- With your theme firmly in mind, you can use the full contents listing to find bulletins that cover the same area. The prime place to look is the title of the *Reflection*. You can also look for Scripture texts that correspond to one of the Mass readings.
- The *Reflection*, whether in the main text or in the questions that follow it, contain ideas that can be used in a homily.
- Our Story columns may provide examples of people who lived out a particular virtue that you are discussing in your homily.
- The sections on *Parenting* and *Family Activities* are potential aids for homilies that urge listeners to respond to the Scripture with concrete actions during the coming week.
- These suggestions are appropriate at all times, but *RENEWING FAMILY FAITH* becomes particularly useful if your parish is following the *Why Catholic?* process. *Why Catholic?* and *RENEWING FAMILY FAITH* are structured in the same way, based on the four major sections of the *Catechism*. There are twelve sessions in the *Why Catholic?* process for each of the four main sections in the *Catechism*, and there are four corresponding series of *RENEWING FAMILY FAITH* bulletins—

12 bulletins in each series.

Other Ideas for Using

RENEWING FAMILY FAITH

Thanks to feedback from those using *RENEWING FAMILY FAITH* (especially when they are also following the *Why Catholic?* process) we know that some parishes take them in bulk, and distribute them:

- with the parish bulletin at the Sunday Mass
- to those taking part in the small faith-sharing groups, so that they can take home and extend to their families something of what has been shared in those groups

We know that in some parishes, they are used not only for religious education but also in the training of the catechists. Others have told us that beyond religious education in its broad sense, these bulletins are a valuable resource for sacramental preparation: for First Eucharist and Confirmation candidates and for those involved in RCIA, whether as candidates or as accompaniers of those candidates.