

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* During Religious Education Sessions

These bulletins can complement religious education programs if the bulletins are matched with the sessions by topic. You can download a list of the bulletin topics at www.renewintl.org/store.

- Having identified the theme, you can explore which elements in the bulletin will best serve the objective of your religious education session. Where the theme of the bulletin exactly matches the theme of your session, there will certainly be something you can use in the *Reflection* and its questions. Again, the *Table Talk* questions complement the questions offered at the end of the *Reflection*.
- Our story of a person who provided an example of living the Christian faith can be a significant contribution to a religious education session.
- Often religious education sessions are strong on intellectual content, because the main objective is to advance the participants in their understanding and appreciation of a particular aspect of the faith. However, faith is not only about understanding: really believing something should have consequences in the way we behave. Many of the *Family Activities* suggestions are useful here—adapted as necessary to the age of your students.
- Some parishes using the *Why Catholic?* process schedule the adult faith-sharing sessions at the same time as the religious education sessions. To establish a parallel between what the adults and youngsters are doing, you may plan to begin or end the religious education session with about five minutes dedicated to one aspect of the bulletin corresponding to the day's *Why Catholic?* theme.