

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* When Visiting the Sick and the Housebound

Some of us visit the sick out of simple friendship or love. Others do it lovingly as part of ministry, perhaps to bring the Eucharist to those who cannot attend Mass.

Whatever the reason for our visits, they can be moments for faith sharing. Often, we know this in our hearts: particularly if the illness is a serious and life-threatening one, we know there are important things we would like to be saying to each other.

The *RENEWING FAMILY FAITH* bulletins can serve as essential pastoral role here. They can launch us into that faith sharing at what may be privileged moments.

One simple approach would be to organize a visit as a family and to include the sick or homebound person in your faith sharing. But even if you happen to be alone with the person, you can offer a copy of the bulletin, and then suggest that you work through part of it together. You will need to have read it well in advance and chosen the elements that are most appropriate for this sharing.

- Often it will be the *Reflection*, with the questions that follow it. The *Table-Talk* questions can be used to supplement or even replace the *Reflection* questions, if you judge them to be more suitable for the circumstances of the person you are visiting. If you feel the theme of the *Reflection* is not appropriate, then look to other elements in the bulletin.
- *Pondering the Word* has the advantage of being short—which is an important consideration if the person with whom you are sharing tires easily. Read the text from Scripture slowly and clearly. Invite the person who is sick to read it as well. Encourage the person to say what words or phrases in the text resonate with him or her. When you have both given your initial reaction to the text, read it again, prayerfully.

Then let yourselves be prompted by the questions the bulletin offers.

- The quote from the *Catechism*, in these circumstances, is something that should be used to complement the sharing, rather than as yet another element on which to focus. Use the quote when you sense that it affirms something that one of you is saying. Similarly, read it aloud if you feel that it helps to answer a question that one of you has raised.
- When you feel that the sharing has run its course, draw it to a close with prayer. This could be a spontaneous prayer, with elements of thanksgiving and petition: thanksgiving for what has been shared; petition for your needs, and particularly those of the person who is sick. The *Blessing* on the back page of the bulletin makes an ideal concluding prayer.