

Curriculum Tips for Becoming Disciples

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Celebrating the Domestic Church

The U.S. Catholic bishops in the pastoral letter “Follow the Way of Love” have publicly affirmed that “a family is our first community and the most basic way in which the Lord gathers us, forms us and acts in the world. The early church expressed this truth by calling the Christian family a “domestic church” or “church of the home.” The point of the teaching is simple, yet profound. As Christian families, you not only belong to the church, but your daily life is a true expression of the church.”



The General Directory of Catechesis places the family at the center of faith formation, saying, “In every Christian family the different aspects and functions of the life of the entire church may be reflected: mission, catechesis, witness, prayer and relationships. The family as a locus of catechesis has a unique privilege: transmitting the Gospel by rooting it in the context of profound human values. It is, indeed, a Christian education that is more witnessed to than taught, more occasional than systematic, more on-going and daily than structured into periods.”

This issue of “Curriculum Tips” will focus on how we as catechists and parents can help nurture the faith of families and empower and equip them to learn and share the Catholic faith, to pray, and to live their faith at home and in the world.



- * Have faith-oriented materials around the house, such as Bible stories and stories of saints, as well as stories that show ordinary people engaged in sharing and forgiving and being inclusive. Books on the beauty and wonder of nature are also inspiring.
- * Bring relevant topics in the news to the dinner table for discussion. Make your opinion clear and connected to your own Gospel faith, without being preachy or forcing your children to agree.
- * Develop friendships with people of faith and invite them to your home. Discuss positive things happening in your parish when your child is present.
- * Follow your child’s lead. Listen carefully for moments when a child raises or deals with an issue that is faith-related (death, anxiety, self-worth, a need for reconciliation, questions about God, creation etc.)
- * Never pretend to know all the answers. Some answers can be researched together with your children. Some questions have only a personal response of faith.



Moral Formation in Classroom and Family

In its outcomes, the Curriculum “Becoming Disciples” recognizes that loving responsibility develops throughout childhood

- ◆ from obedience and respect for parents,
- ◆ to kindness toward friends and neighbors,



- ◆ to following laws God gave us to teach us how to live,
- ◆ to caring for the earth,
- ◆ to educating and making decisions according to conscience,



- ◆ to understanding sin, virtue and grace,
- ◆ to understanding what it means to grow in mind, body and spirit in Christ.,
- ◆ to applying the Church’s teachings on social justice in caring for the poor.



The Tenets of our Faith Appendix in the Curriculum Guide lists the Christian tradition’s most important guidelines: the Ten Commandments, the Two Great Commandments, the Beatitudes, the Cardinal and Theological Virtues and the Works of Mercy.

Creating

A

Covenant



A covenant is essentially an agreement between two people or groups (i.e. parents and children or teacher and students.) The covenant God established with the people of God in the Bible can be a model for agreements about loving, responsible behavior in households and classrooms. All covenants have terms or expectations. For example, God agreed to make a nation out of Abraham and Sarah’s descendants and in response to God’s offer, the people agreed to be faithful to God and follow God’s commandments. (Genesis 17:1-22) A covenant today might look like this:

Parent-Child Covenant (Or Teacher-Student Covenant)

Child’s responsibility: Out of love and respect, I agree to _____.

Parent’s responsibility: Out of love and respect, I agree to _____.

Consequences for breaking the Covenant:

Child:

Parent:

Rewards for honoring the Covenant:

Child:

Parent:

Child’s Signature:

Parent’s Signature:

Date:

Teaching the Commandments

(The Fun Way)



The First Commandment: I, the Lord, am your God. You shall not have other gods besides me.

Trust Game: Stand behind your child. Tell him to relax and place your hand on his shoulder. Tell him that you are going to ask him to fall backwards into your arms and that he is not permitted to move his feet or his arms to catch his balance when he is falling. His responsibility is to trust that you will catch him before he falls to the floor. Tell him to begin falling when you take your hand off his shoulder and when you say the word “fall.” Start by letting him fall only a couple of inches (and be sure to catch him!)

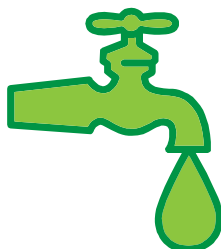


Discuss the first commandment as ultimately about trusting in God. If we love and trust God more than anyone, God will take care of us even in scary situations.

The Second Commandment: You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.

No More Water: Shut off the main water line to the house just before your child comes home from school. Don't let your child know this is going to happen. (You may want to have a couple of gallons of water on hand.) Let your child experience what it is to not have any water for a number of hours you select.

Discuss how precious a water supply is. Taking water for granted is like taking the name of God in vain. In ancient Israel, the people honored the name of God by not speaking it out loud. They understood that if God were treated as too familiar, they would begin to take God for granted. In our society, we take so much for granted and this causes us not to appreciate the value of things—like water or the name of God. Encourage your child to use God's name with care and respect because God is far more precious to us than water.



The Third Commandment: Remember to keep holy the Sabbath Day.

An Honoring the Sabbath Covenant: Together, come up with and commit to practical ways your family will keep the Sabbath holy. For example, participate actively at Eucharist, create fun quality and quantity time for family and loved ones, avoid unnecessary work and activities that cause other people to have to work (such as shopping or certain forms of entertainment,) care for others.



The Fourth Commandment: Honor your father and mother.

Honoring Elders: Visit elderly persons living in nursing homes who rarely get visits. Invite single adults or single parents and their families to have dinner or share an outing with you. Share family stories of elder relatives.

The Fifth Commandment: You shall not kill. (Promote life.)



Build a composter: Discuss during dinner some night where all the food on your table comes from. Go back in the food chain until the Earth is identified as the source of food. Dirt is a very important part of God's creation. Composting creates healthy dirt in which food can grow. Loosen the soil about 6 inches where you will build your composter. Use 4 equal-sized pallets or skids from a lumber yard and a rope to form a box in the ground. Layer alternately with dried leaves and twigs first, kitchen scraps (no meat or milk products) and lawn clippings second. Build the layers for 6 months. Turn the compost with a garden fork and let it sit for 6 months. Now it is ready to use!

Prayers for Family Life

Birthday Prayer—We thank you God for the gift of life. Today is a day of joyful celebration as we honor the completion of another year in the life of _____. We are grateful for the gifts that he/she brings to our family, particularly the gift of _____ (each member of the family name one gift.) Bless _____ and all of us in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.



Family Vacation—God, we begin our family vacation with joy, excitement and expectations. Let us be aware that we are creating memories for a lifetime. Lord, we thank you for giving us new places and adventures as opportunities to be together, laugh, play and deepen our love for one another, away from the routines that sometimes distract us from each other. Help us to receive all the gifts you give us during this vacation with gratitude and reverence. We pray in the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.



Illness—Lord God, you are the source of all healing. Sickness has entered our home and touched _____. We ask you to heal both his/her body and spirit. We ask for wisdom as we consider the methods we will use to assist his/her healing. And for as long as the sickness remains, give us the gift of patience and hope. We pray in the name of Father, Son and Spirit. Amen.



This is the last issue of Curriculum Tips for a while. All 12 issues are published on cdow.org for



Ascension Parenting

For a parent, the Ascension is an annual reminder to step back and let the Spirit lead the child's life. Parenting is a constant process of letting go so the child will learn all the skills necessary for adult life.

At school age, parents are asked to let their child go—into a wider school community that can help to form the child. Catechists are among these privileged people who receive and care for your child.

The Spirit is present in diverse ways in the world and so exposing your child to many different ideas helps her or him to come to a well-rounded awareness of the ever-greater mystery of Life and of God.

Nurture of your child during school age is a partnership between many trusted adults in a child's broadening life. Staying in communication with your child's catechist and other teachers and coaches is therefore essential. Exposing children to positive models of living and of faith becomes an opportunity to expand your child's experience of God's Spirit, Who is present in a multitude and variety of ways.