



## From Parking Lot to Participation Some Summary Thoughts

During two weeks in May Catechists from over 25 parishes in the diocese gathered to talk about the participation of families in parish life.

Some of the concerns expressed were:

- Our Catholic schools are full but many families do not engage in Sunday worship or any other parish activity.
- Many families come for Sacramental Preparation but it's a one-off

Our conclusions:

We don't have a magic wand but we do realise that:

We desire that families be full and active participants in parish life including attending Sunday Mass.

We can't change them what can we do?

- Recognise that families are doing the best can with what have - we can't judge we must welcome
- We can be like older siblings it may be that families
  - Feel have not got the tools that they are inadequate in faith knowledge and anyway send children to Catholic school.
  - Parents think anyone can do it better.
  - They are time poor.
  - Mass is not family friendly.
  - Individuals feel that they will not be welcome because they are not good enough
  - People have been hurt by the lack of acceptance or...

We are therefore challenged to:

- Companion families with no hoops, just welcome and love.  
be like Pope Francis demonstrating welcome and acceptance.
- Use their presence at significant moments to welcome, engage and encourage their participation.
- Ask ourselves: ***Are our parishes family friendly?***

## Starters for 10.

To get the creative juices going:

- Deliver messages that touch the heart. For instance, use an inspirational e-mail “forward” for parent-child discussion, a child-oriented movie or cartoon with questions that touch the heart, or simple stories like those found in *Chicken Soup for the Soul*.
- CELEBRATE DIVERSITY! Organize a way to share family customs or cultural rituals related to birthdays, anniversaries, religious observance of Christmas, Advent, Lent, and Marian Devotions.
- Initiate life-long support and faith-communities at the time of Baptism. NETWORK FAMILIES who celebrate a Baptism within the year. Provide a formative experience to this group of parents once a year. Host an annual anniversary reunion of Baptismal families. Offer age-related support in child-rearing. Network families to organize off-campus discussions in private homes, cafes, or “wherever.”
- Prior to the start of the annual Sacramental Preparation Program schedule an “expect to see you there” registration session. DIGITIZE A MEETING. it so that you can offer it on a morning, an afternoon, an evening, before/after the Saturday Vigil Mass, and after Sunday Masses. Post it on the parish website for at-home viewing. Explain expectations. Demonstrate a process for preparing together at home.
- Don’t forget the follow up session in Sacramental Preparation. Make it fun, ongoing. If we remember them they will remember us.

**Some Resources** Perhaps schools could be encouraged to include links in newsletters once a month (or more)

The Religious Education section of the diocesan website has an entire section *Family Faith* it has activities and information suitable for pre-schoolers (Fun Together) and above. It includes videos and print off sheets (Explore Together).

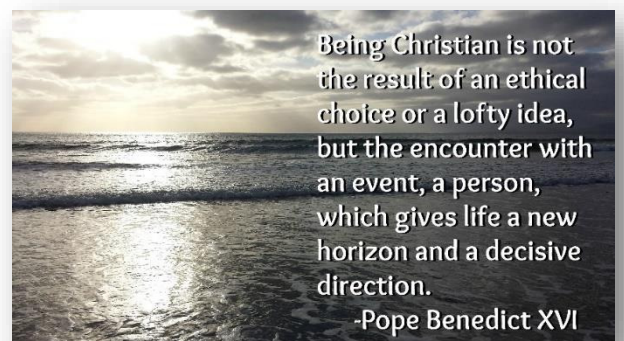
<http://www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz/religious-education/> .

The New Zealand National Centre for Religious Studies has launched a new website that includes a section that is family faith centred.

<http://www.faithjourney.co.nz/faith-family.html>

Following are the collated responses from our sharing.

Thank you to everyone that came and shared their wisdom.



## What we shared Catechist Catch-ups May 2017

Catechists from over 25 parishes in the diocese gathered to talk about the participation of families in parish life.

This is an overview of some of the conversations to promote further discussion in communities.

### What family-friendly activities/opportunities for participation does the parish offer/support?

- Cultural Masses
- ✓ ✓ Term School Mass/Children's Mass
- ✓ Annual Church Fair
- Weddings
- Cultural fund-raising day
- ✓ ✓ Youth group & youth fun nights
- Third Order of Mary
- ✓ Legion of Mary
- Stations of the Cross on Mount
- Ethnic specific functions, eg Samoan, Tongan, Cook Is
- ✓ Ethnic specific Masses
- ✓ ✓ ✓ Cultural Feast day celebrations
- Sunday School class
- ✓ ✓ 'Cuppa' after Mass - sit down and talk about something said at Mass
  - Also sharing tables of produce
- Father's blessing at end of Sunday Mass
- ✓ ✓ Family groups eg Passionist Family group for social activities
- ✓ Fund raising activities
- ✓ Friendship Social group for Seniors
- Devotional groups
- Bible study
- New migrants support
- Recollection days
- Parish magazine
- ✓ ✓ Altar servers
- ✓ Education in Faith ages 6-12
- St Vincent de Paul
- School parent teas
- ✓ Children's Liturgy
- Pre-school group (in recess)
- Play group
- BBQ
- Prayer Tree
- Movie night
- Youth camps
- Pub Quiz
- Children-elderly encounter
- Block Rosary

#### The Questions

- How do we make these opportunities friendly to those that are not already coming to Sunday Mass?
- What more can we offer?
- How do we follow up the Sacramental moments to encourage engagement?
- How do families find out about things if they are not present at Mass?

### How do families find out what is happening in the parish?

- ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ Newsletters/weekly bulletins
- ✓ ✓ School newsletter
- ✓ Website
- Facebook page
- Parish app
- ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ Word of mouth
- ✓ ✓ Announcements after Mass
- Noticeboard
- Parish Office
- ✓ ✓ email

#### The Questions

- How can we do this better?
- Particularly how can we use Social Media more effectively?

### If one thing in your parish could change regarding family participation what would it be?

- Improved notices/directory service to publicise activities
- Make events more inviting/exciting to increase numbers and encourage others to attend
- Family party & prayer get together once a month or more
- Culture - working family
- More individuals speaking at Sunday Mass
- Youth group/youth participation
- Permanent parish priest
- More focus on including families participating if they don't have children at school eg bringing up gifts
- More family events
- Family groups
- Better physical space
- Homilies aimed at the children rather than adults
- Bringing families together
- Parents proactive, role models for kids
- More outreach

#### The Questions

- How do we make people feel welcome even if they don't think they are good enough?
- What happens when we finish sacramental preparation sessions do we just expect them now to feel welcome but nothing has changed?

### Why do people/families not engage beyond events eg First Communion?

- Mass is boring
- Relevance of Mass centrality missing
- Don't understand so don't see the need
- Too busy - other things - sports
- Lost habit - no need to
- Working 2-3 jobs to give children opportunities (and just basics)
- Invitation vs judgement
- Lonely - don't know or feel uncomfortable with unfamiliar or pressure
- Judged - many have experiences of this first hand, some presume they will be

#### The Questions

- What opportunities are available to learn more about faith?
- What are our welcoming outreach actions?