

Families. Faith. Faith Formation. What we see, how we can respond.



In this brief document you will find some points found John Roberto's new book, "Families at the Center of Faith Formation" Look at some of the points and reflect, what stands out to you, what do you see in your own experience and compare to what is being said from the following excerpts. We can discuss this at the next CL meeting, October 13 & 14.

A.

DISPLAY 3.1

Shifts in faith formation

From an emphasis on . . .

- Programs
- Parenting as a strategy
- Pathologizing or idealizing families
- "Passing on" the faith
- Serving families
- Congregation-centered ministries

Toward an emphasis on . . .

- Relationships
- Parenting as a relationship
- Tapping their strengths and resilience
- "Living into" the faith
- Empowering families
- Community-centered ministries

From this chart, what words struck you and how do you see the shifts in faith formation? How can you move from the left column to the right column of emphasis? What strategies can we implement?

B. New Set of Attitudes

Embracing the Family-at-the Center Approach means adopting a new set of attitudes and assumptions about families and faith formation, including:

- Seeing the home as the essential and foundational environment for faith nurture, faith practice, and the healthy development of young people.
- Reinforcing the family's central role in promoting healthy development and faith growth in children and youth, and enhancing the faith-forming capacity of parents and grandparents.
- Building faith formation around the lives of the today's families and parents, rather than having the congregation prescribe the programs and activities that families will participate in.

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- Addressing the diversity of family life today by moving away from one-size-fits all programs and strategies toward a variety of programs and strategies tailored to the unique life tasks and situations, concerns and interest, and religious-spiritual journeys of parents and families.
- Overcoming the age-segregated nature of church and its programming by engaging parents and the whole family in meaningful intergenerational relationships and faith formation that involves all ages and families.
 - Building upon the assets, strengths, and capacities present in parents and families, rather than focusing on their deficits and solving problems.
- Partnering with parents in working toward shared goals and aspirations for their young people by supporting, equipping, and resourcing them.

From the above, what is most challenging? How can you use these points to move the emphasis of your program to be more family centered.

C. Letting Go...

Embracing the Family-at-the Center Approach means letting go of outdated attitudes and practices that tend to dominate congregations' approach to families. It means letting go of control over families—which congregations really don't have anyway—and becoming family friendly and family responsive in everything we do. It means moving away from spending time, energy, and resources to get parents and families to comply with congregational priorities and expectations (“what we want them to do”) toward becoming responsive to what is happening in the lives of parents and families, and engaging with them wherever they may be.

What challenges do you see in implementing this type of vision in your parish? What do you think the long term impact would be? Is there something in your parish that you would be ready to “let go” of in order to make a shift?