



Preparing Disciples for the Domestic Church

Parish Toolkit

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The Domestic Church

In recent decades, the Church has affirmed the family's place at the heart of discipleship and mission. The Second Vatican Council highlighted the domestic Church—the Christian family—as a privileged place for evangelization, catechesis, and spiritual growth. This affirmation has continued in recent papal teaching, particularly St. John Paul II's "The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World" and Pope Francis' "On Love in the Family." The most recent edition of the Directory for Catechesis also emphasizes that the family is the main locus of formation of disciples.

During these same decades, family structures in the United States have faced serious challenges. The breakdown of the family and the decline of the practice of the faith have been well documented,⁴ and sociologists have found that these two phenomena are interrelated.

Pastoral strategies that ignore marriages and families have been called attempts to fight the smoke of religious decline, but not the fire. Put another way, when pastoral strategies try to plant the seeds of faith—evangelization and catechesis—without addressing the health of the soil—the family—they will be less than effective. To state it more hopefully, studies have shown that positive outcomes are more likely when the family participates in the formation of youth.⁶

Pope Francis has emphasized that evangelization efforts must go where the people are and must speak to the desires of their hearts. Even as family units have changed, a primary concern in every person's heart is his or her domestic life. Tending to these concerns, in part through aids in parenting and marriage skills, speaks a message that will be heard.

This toolkit offers strategies and resources that aim to serve and strengthen families. These efforts include marriage enrichment opportunities, but they go beyond marriage enrichment, recognizing that in every culture, and particularly in our day, the family

(domestic Church) comes in all shapes and sizes. Without diminishing the importance or beauty of a healthy marriage, the resources below attempt to meet and accompany families in any circumstance or situation.

No single pastoral strategy is sufficient to ensure effective pastoral care, and diocesan staff are available for consultation and support whenever a parish is implementing a ministry initiative targeted toward marriages and families. Email toolkits@dmdiocese.org.

Familiaris Consortio, 1981, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html

Amoris Laetitia, 2016, https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/



papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf

Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, Directory for Catechesis, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC, (2020).

Everstadt, Mary, *How the West Really Lost God: A New Theory of Secularization*. West Conshohocken. PA: Templeton Press, (2013).

Van Epp, John, De Gance, J. P. *Endgame: The Church's Strategic Move to Save Faith and Family in America*. United States: Love Thinks, LLC, (n.d.).

Leif Kehrwald and John Roberto from Lifelong Faith Associates have produced several papers on this topic. Key among their work is "Practices for Forming Faith with Families and Parents." https://www.lifelongfaith.com/uploads/5/1/6/4/5164069/practices_for_forming_faith_-_families.pdf

Theological and Pastoral Guiding Principles

Gaudium et Spes, "The Church in the Modern World," Vatican II (December 7, 1965)

Topic: The primary vocation of parents is to ensure the education and religious formation of their children, no. 50

Topic: The family is a school of virtue, no. 52.

https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html

Familiaris Consortio, "Fellowship of the Family," Apostolic Exhortation, Pope John Paul II (December 2, 1981)

Topic: The unity, charity, and conjugal love shared between a married man and woman reflects the image and likeness of God and his love for us, no. 11

Topic: Sacramental marriage is a source of great joy and happiness, no. 13.

Topic: Marriage and family life reflect God's covenant, in Christ, to the world, no. 50.

https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html

Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us, USCCB Pastoral Plan (1999)

Topic: Seeing the domestic church and adult faith formation as the priority and organizing principle of all catechesis, nos. 40-44

Topic: Principles for planning, conducting, and enculturating adult faith formation, nos. 75-87

<https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/adult-faith-formation/our-hearts>

Sacramentum Caritatis, "The Sacrament of Charity," Apostolic Exhortation, Pope Benedict XVI (February 22, 2007)

Topic: The connection between the sacraments of Eucharist and Matrimony, nos. 27-29

https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis.html

Evangelii Gaudium, "Joy of the Gospel," Apostolic Exhortation, Pope Francis (November 24, 2013)

Topic: The primary proclamation that is central to any catechesis, especially within marriage and family life ministries, no. 164

Topic: Effective evangelization within family life and marriage ministry requires a focus on the "art of accompaniment," nos. 169-173

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html

Address of Pope Francis for the Conclusion of the Extraordinary Synod on the Family (October 18, 2014)

Topic: Common temptations to navigate when providing marriage and family ministry.

https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/october/documents/papa-francesco_20141018_conclusionone-sinodo-dei-vescovi.html

Amoris Laetitia, "The Joy of Love," Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation (March 19, 2016)

Topic: Spirituality of marriage and the family life, nos. 313-325

Topic: The experiences and challenges of families, nos. 31-57

https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf

Directory for Catechesis –Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization 2020

Topic: The need for Gospel-Centered Catechesis, nos. 57-60

Topic: The Baptismal Catechumenate as the Source and Inspiration for Catechesis, nos. 61-65

Topic: Family Catechesis, nos. 226-235

Topic: Catechesis Through the Seasons of Life

Early Childhood, nos. 236-239

Middle Childhood and Young People, nos. 240-256

Adults, nos. 257-265

Elderly, nos. 266-268

Topic: Catechesis of Persons with Disabilities, nos. 269-272

Directory for Catechesis is not available online. It can be purchased at https://www.amazon.com/s?k=directory+for+catechesis+uscgb+2020&crd=1P9182Z7TLUEU&srefix=directory+for+catechesis%2Caps%2C105&ref=nb_sb_ss_ts-doa-p_4_24

A summary of the **Directory** may be purchased at https://www.amazon.com/NEW-Directory-Catechesis-Highlights-Catechists/dp/162785567X/ref=sr_1_2?crd=1JFQGOW9XQoDB&keywords=directory+for+catechesis&qid=1701711846&srefix=directory+for+catechesis+%2Caps%2C112&sr=8-2

Downloadable worksheets for the **Directory** for Catechesis may be found at https://www.amazon.com/s?k=directory+for+catechesis+uscgb+2020&crd=1P9182Z7TLUEU&srefix=directory+for+catechesis%2Caps%2C105&ref=nb_sb_ss_ts-doa-p_4_24

Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life –Dicastery for the Laity, the Family, and Life (2022)



Topic: Three basic principles for ministry to married couples and families, nos. 12-14

Topic: An overview of a catechumenal model for marriage preparation, nos. 16-26

Topic: Ministering to couples in crisis, no. 91

https://www.laityfamilylife.va/content/dam/laityfamilylife/amoris-laetitia/OrientamentiCatecumenatomatrimoniale/Catechumenal%20Pathways_ENG.pdf

Parish Assessment

Before any ministry initiative begins, it is important to review the landscape, set clear goals, and develop a plan for assessment. The following resources can assist a parish in achieving these goals.

An asterisk (*) before a resource's title indicates that our diocesan Domestic Church Commission believes it is a resource of particular value, either for its pastoral vision or its practical effectiveness.

***The Disciple Maker Index** is a comprehensive parish survey that can help a parish develop an awareness of its culture and its effectiveness in comparison to other Catholic parishes around the country. The survey has been developed by the Catholic Leadership Institute, which offers further consultation to help parishes develop a plan of action. <https://www.catholicleaders.org/disciple-maker-index>

Setting and Measuring Goals with measurable outcomes and an action plan can assist parishes in any

new ministry initiative. For resources to assist in this endeavor, see:

- SMART GOALS description and worksheet: <https://resources.catholicleaders.org/dmi-resources-home/dmi-resources-reporting-and-planning-resources/smart-goals>
- An effective planning format is found in the book *Traction* by Gino Wickman, published by BenBella Books <https://benbellabooks.com/our-books/>

When preparing disciples for the domestic Church, some central questions that can help a parish assess their ministry strategy include:

1. Does our parish strive to meet families where they are, both by ministries that leave the parish campus and ministries that address the needs and experiences of families in their day-to-day lives?
2. Does our parish honor the role of parents as the first evangelizers and catechists of their children? One way to measure this is to review the investment of time, personnel, space, materials, and cost that is made in adult faith formation, compared to the investments that are made in youth activities.
3. Does our parish effectively accompany families in their daily struggles and challenges? One sign of this is the existence of ministries that serve families and couples who are struggling.

The following questions are rooted in the 2023 Convocation of the National Community of Catechetical Leaders (NCCL), *Journey toward the Future of Catechesis*.

1. Does our parish have a shared vision for catechesis that forms families and people of all ages in getting to know Jesus Christ and his Gospel of liberating salvation, choosing Jesus' way of life, and living the mission of Christ?
2. Through our catechetical ministry, do families and people of all ages hear the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus and his saving death and resurrection so their lives may be transformed into disciples of Jesus Christ?
3. Is our catechetical ministry (programs, activities, experiences) guided by an understanding of catechesis as accompaniment, education, and formation that is for all ages and families?

4. Does our catechetical ministry see human experience as integral to catechesis—its content and method—and does it seek to help illuminate and interpret people's experiences of life in the light of the Gospel?

Parish Staff and Ministry Leadership Training

***Communio** assists parishes in two main areas: strategic outreach to couples and families in the area who are not engaged in the parish, and parish coaching and accountability to develop marriage and family centered ministries. Their work focuses on equipping parish leadership to effectively reach and serve their geographic community. <https://communio.org/>

Catholic Leadership Institute offers various programs to assist parishes to develop thriving evangelization and mission cultures. <https://www.catholicleaders.org/priests-pastors>

Amazing Parish offers training and coaching to help parishes develop more effective ministry plans. <https://amazingparish.org/>

Divine Renovation is already active in the Diocese of Des Moines and is built around a goal to “inspire, connect, and equip parishes to be missional, and through them bring people to Jesus.” They offer webinars, resources, and coaching for parish leadership. www.divinerenovation.org/for-priests/

Best Practices

Every situation is different, and so, in addition to the listed best practices, the diocesan Marriage and Family Life Office is available for consultation and support whenever a parish is implementing a ministry initiative targeted toward marriages and families. Contact John Gaffney at 515-237-5026 or jgaffney@dmdiocese.org.

1. Pastoral accompaniment

There are no quick fixes. Parishes must cultivate ministries that engage and accompany people for extended periods of time.

2. A Church that “goes out”

If parishioners and other individuals no longer come to the parish campus, pastoral ministers must be willing to go out and meet them within their own context.

3. Answering the questions that people are asking

Many couples are looking for skills to strengthen their marriages and their families. Offering opportunities to address the concrete realities of family life will strengthen bonds between parishioners and parishes.

4. Evangelization and catechesis in the context of the family unit

Efforts should engage not only individuals, but also families and communities that can be mutually supportive and enriching.

5. Ministry that provides a holistic formation for families and people of all ages, including

Knowledge of the faith

Understanding and experiencing liturgical celebrations

Christian formation of the moral conscience

Educating for prayer and in prayer

Belonging to the Church and living its mission

Section 1 Life in Christ: Resources for Parents as First Catechists of Their Children

The Church is called to cooperate with parents through suitable pastoral initiatives, assisting them in the fulfilment of their educational mission. She must always do this by helping them to appreciate their proper role and to realize that by their reception of the sacrament of marriage they become ministers of their children's education. Pope Francis, On Love in the Family (Amoris Laetitia), 85

Parents reveal the face of God to their children in all their interactions from their earliest ages. The family is where children first experience God's love and care, where they first learn to share, to care for others, to forgive and be forgiven. Parents need support in this role, both in attending to their own formation in faith and to that of their children. The following resources offer tools to support parents as they embrace their role as the first catechists of their children.

Resources

**Fashioning Faith* offers access to thousands of resources that can be searched by topic, age, and other categories. For each topic, a variety of formats are offered,

including all ages learning together, breakouts by age, take-home activities, parent retreats, and many more. Resources are available as PDF files to be used as is, or in Word, to be adapted to parish needs, and are often accompanied by PowerPoint presentations. English and some resources in Spanish. \$120 yearly subscription

This collection also contains resources relevant to sections two and four of this toolkit. <https://pastoral.center/fashioning-faith>

Intergenerational: Learning Programs & Activities Designed for Intergenerational & Family Faith Formation

These resources, now updated, were originally developed in the early 2000s to serve parishes embracing the Generations of Faith faith-formation model. They are now available online, at no cost, for parishes to use as is or to adapt. Each session offers options for adaptation to different ages and models. Most are available as PDFs, as well as Word documents that can be edited. Some have been adapted for an ecumenical audience, but all content is appropriate for Catholic parishes to use. The section on "Christian Practices" was developed in recent years for an ecumenical audience. Published by Lifelong Faith Associates. <https://www.intergenerationalfaith.com>

**Pathways* is a whole-family ministry suite with flexible options for different family circumstances. It provides a model for true accompaniment of families, for building of relationships, and for meaningful pastoral care of families. Published by Faith and Family Life Catholic Ministries. Some



materials are available in Spanish. This resource is also relevant to sections two and three of this toolkit. <https://www.fflcm.org/pathways>

Note: Many parishes are beginning to move toward more family-centered options for their formal catechetical programs. The number of resources available for this is increasing rapidly. If your parish is considering a move to a more family-oriented or intergenerational option for your faith-formation program, or simply looking at different curriculum options for your existing program, please contact John Gaffney jgaffney@dmdioocese.org at the diocesan office for more information.

Websites

*<https://www.catholicfamilyfaith.org> provides a wide variety of curated resources for parish leaders related to several areas of family ministry. These include faith practice (prayer, service, reading the Bible, etc.), parenting, liturgical year, sacraments, and more.

<https://www.nccclatholic.org> is the website for the National Community of Catechetical Leaders. It offers training, webinars, research, Church documents, and other resources for parish ministers for their own enrichment and training.

<https://www.lifelongfaith.com> is dedicated to ministry to all the generations in a parish. It includes information on the latest research, best practices, use of technology, curated resources, parish programming, and more.

Books

Leif Kehrwald, John Roberto, Gene Roehlkepartain, Jolene Roehlkepartain, *Families at the Center of Faith Formation*, 2016, Lifelong Faith Associates <https://www.lifelongfaith.com/books.html>

John Roberto, Lisa Brown, et al. *Faith Formation with a New Generation*, 2018, Lifelong Faith Associates, <https://www.lifelongfaith.com/books.html>

Section 2 Sacramental Life: Supporting and Encouraging Participation in Sacramental Life of Parish

If a family is centered on Christ, he will unify and illumine its entire life.

Pope Francis, *On Love in the Family (Amoris Laetitia)*, 317

Family life and the sacramental life are intimately



linked and mutually enriching. Our goal in this section is to provide resources that help families connect their daily experiences to their participation in the sacraments of the Church.

Preparation to celebrate the sacraments is one aspect of parish sacramental life. When parishes are looking at programming options for this ministry, they are encouraged to engage with programs that involve parents and the family. For information about approved curriculum or programs for sacramental preparation, please contact John Gaffney jgaffney@dmdioocese.org at the diocesan office.

Resources

Books

Celebrating Sunday for Catholic Families is an annual publication that contains each Sunday's Gospel, a guide for reflecting on the Gospel as a family, ideas for conversation to and from Mass, and family activities that help with the connection between the gospel and daily family life. In the back there are prayers (Our Father, Hail Mary, etc.) with explanations about each prayer. Published by Liturgy Training Publications. Also available in Spanish: *Las familias católicas celebran el domingo*. \$6 per yearly issue; check with diocesan worship office for possible discounted pricing. Quantity discounts available. <https://ltp.org/products/details/CSCF25/celebrating-sunday-for-catholic-families-2024-2025> <https://ltp.org/products/details/FCCD25/las-familias-catolicas-celebran-el-domingo-2024-2025>

Catholic Parent Know-How is a series of eight-page magazines covering sacramental topics such as Why Do We Have to Go to Mass?, Preparing for Baptism, Preparing Your Child for Confirmation, First Communion, and First Reconciliation for children

from kindergarten to grade 6, published by Our Sunday Visitor in English and Spanish. \$1.95 an issue (Price reduction at 10 or more copies)

This series also contains titles relevant to sections one, three, and five of this toolkit. <https://www.orderosv.com/Search?q=catholic+parent+know-how>

Websites

***52 Sundays: Celebrate the Lord's Day!** invites households to dive into the Sunday readings with discussion questions, fun activities, information about a saint, a recipe, and more. Published by the Archdiocese of Detroit in English and Spanish. Free. <https://www.52sundays.com>

Formed is a Catholic streaming service that provides digital/video resources for all ages covering a wide array of topics including parenting, sacraments, Bible studies, the Mass, saints, and much more. Published by the Augustine Institute. Subscriptions are free for parishioners when a parish has a membership. English and Spanish content www.formed.org

Agape Catholic Ministries provides online marriage preparation, quinceañera preparation, a Natural Family Planning course, and more, with remote or local facilitation. This could be particularly helpful for smaller parishes or those with limited volunteer networks. English and Spanish content <https://www.agapecatholicministries.com/>

Books

By Word and Example: A Bridge to Sacramental Formation for Parents (Ebook) is a digital resource for parents who have children preparing for the sacraments. Using the three-step spiritual formation process of encounter, accompany, and serve, parents are guided through the basic aspects of the sacraments and are also given opportunities for their families to witness the Catholic faith through acts of service to others. Published by RCL Benzinger. \$11. Website: <https://store.rclbenzinger.com/product/word-and-example-bridge-sacramental-formation-parents>

Section 3 Healthy, Holy Life: Sharing Life Skills and Formation in the Catholic Moral Tradition

The family is called to join in daily prayer, to read the word of God and to share in Eucharistic communion, and thus to grow in love and become ever more fully a temple in which the Spirit dwells.

Pope Francis, *On Love in the Family (Amoris Laetitia)*, 29

Ministry efforts need to connect to people's lived experiences, so that their joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties, become our own (see *Gaudium et Spes*, 1). These resources are meant to connect to the ordinary, secular experiences and contexts that are a part of every family life.

Resources

***Pathways Formation Suite** addresses sacramental preparation and family formation at every level. All materials focus on making the home the cornerstone of faith sharing and development and on supporting and forming parents as the primary educators of the faith. Yearly licensing costs approximately \$100 + material costs

This resource is also relevant to sections one and two of this toolkit. www.fflcm.org

Communio assists parishes in two main areas: strategic outreach to couples and families in the area who are not engaged in the parish, and parish coaching and accountability to develop marriage and family centered ministries. Their work focuses on equipping parish leadership to effectively reach and serve their geographic community. This resource is also relevant to ministry training.

Websites

www.thewholemission.com provides high-quality health education and support for families in all stages, with a concern for care of the whole person. Their goals are to grow and promote access to, and research for, secure methods of natural family planning, specifically the Marquette Method, and to provide breastfeeding education and support for women and families.

<https://www.delreycollective.com/> is a ministry focused

on giving formation and encouragement to ordinary missionary disciples to open their homes (and porches) and host their own life-giving dinners and gatherings.

Books

Parenting with Grace: The Catholic Parents' Guide to Raising Almost Perfect Kids, second edition, by Greg and Lisa Popcak. Our Sunday Visitor, 2010 https://www.amazon.com/Parenting-Grace-Gregory-Lisa-Popcak-dp-1592766854/dp/1592766854/ref=dp_ob_title_bk

Section 4 Community Life: Supporting Households and Connecting Them to the Broader Community

The Church is a family of families, constantly enriched by the lives of all those domestic churches. Pope Francis, On Love in the Family (Amoris Laetitia), 87

Parishes ought to be a family of families. Seeing the parish community in this way can help us understand and address many of the challenges that exist in any community life. Resources in this section are suggested to help the local community deepen their bonds with each other.

Suggested Activities

Parish-led pilgrimage to Cloisters on the Platte Retreat Center near Gretna, Nebraska, with family fun later at Papio Fun Park in Papillion, Nebraska Experience a wonderful retreat, prayer service, or private reflection time at Cloisters on the Platte Retreat Center, and then head to Papio Fun Park in nearby Papillion, Nebraska, with go-carts, batting cages, laser tag, and more. Cost: Free-will donation for Cloisters on the Platte. Papio Fun Park prices vary by activity. <https://cloistersontheplatte.com/> <https://www.papiofunpark.com/>

Parish Family Fun Night Create a fun night for parishioners of all ages! Perhaps you can plan a Catholic trivia night or a parish trivia contest. Or celebrate the parish patron saint's feast day or the founding families heritage or the current parishioners' ethnic tradition with a contest for who can cook the best Italian cookies or dress up the best in honor of St Boniface, for example. Or offer prizes for the best skit or poem or artistic rendering representing the life of St Patrick. Don't forget Mardi Gras, Las Posadas, Oktoberfest, and other seasonal and ethnic celebrations.

Resources

***Fashioning Faith** provides access to thousands of resources that can be searched by topic, age, and other categories. The library of resources features plans for movie nights, faith festivals, parish retreats activities, and more in English and some resources in Spanish Published by The Pastoral Center. \$120 yearly subscription

This collection also contains resources relevant to sections one and two of this toolkit. <https://pastoral.center/fashioning-faith>

Six Dates for Catholic Couples is a parish-sponsored program of videos, worksheets, and prayers for building and strengthening marriages by encouraging husbands and wives to make time to be with each other and have fun. Spanish and English. \$75 for videos, prayers, and handouts

Publisher: John & Teri Bosio—Happy Together, 440 Laurel Hill Drive, Mt. Juliet, TN 37122 <https://www.happy-together.net/six-dates-for-catholic-couples/>

Section 5 When Life Gets Hard: Resources for Struggling Marriages and Families

I sincerely believe that Jesus wants a Church attentive to the goodness which the Holy Spirit sows in the midst of human weakness, a Mother who, while clearly expressing her objective teaching, "always does what good she can, even if in the process, her shoes get soiled by the mud of the street.

Pope Francis, On Love in the Family (Amoris Laetitia), 308

Pope Francis has called for a Church that is a field hospital and asked that ministry occur in the pastoral key of accompaniment. These resources offers ways to walk with individuals and families in difficult times.

Resources

Parish Response to Times of Struggle

People remember who showed up when their parent died and who offered help when they needed it. Most parishes minister well when a death happens. We hope that our parishes will show up when individuals or families are having a tough time in other ways as well. Parish leadership needs to be aware of other occasions or circumstances that need us to show up and to know who in the parish are willing and able to do so.

Possibilities Include:

- Providing meals for families when a member is hospitalized or has a serious illness or injury
- Providing meals for families after the birth or adoption of a child
- Helping with chores, cleaning, repairs or other things in the circumstances above
- Assistance to aging parishioners such as transportation, yard work, and cleaning
- Assisting people after a natural disaster or severe storm
- Outreach and accompaniment of the homebound
- Respite for full-time caregivers

This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but to prompt conversation about how parishes can show care and support to parishioners and members of the wider community in difficult times.

There are websites to assist with these types of projects. They include: <https://www.mealtrain.com> provides a platform to facilitate bringing meals to a household

<https://www.signupgenius.com> is a sign-up platform that can be adapted for a multitude of tasks

<https://www.goodeggfund.org> is a program that provides small one-time grants (under \$500) to help people get through a rough patch

Connecting Persons and Households to Community Resources

It is not unusual for those who work in parish ministry to be approached by someone who is struggling or in crisis. Often, the parish is not equipped to provide the assistance needed. At these times, it is important to know how to connect the person or family with resources in the community that can best serve them in their moment of need.

***Iowa 211** is a service of United Way that can assist in these situations. It offers an extensive list of agencies and organizations that respond to many types of needs.

It can be accessed either by phone or internet.

For an immediate crisis, the first section at the top left of the web page links to hotlines dealing with suicide prevention, abuse, human trafficking, mental health issues, and more. Do not hesitate to seek help with or for the person in an emergency.

In non-emergency situations, a parish staff person or other responder can search the website either by clicking on the categories and sub-categories listed or by typing key words into the search box at the top of the page. When a category opens, a list of applicable agencies appears on the left with a corresponding map on the right to help search for the closest options. Sharing your location will help to narrow the search. There is a description of each agency, along with links to call them, to go to their website, and to get directions.

In our parish leadership roles, we are responsible to represent the teachings of the Church. When assisting with certain situations, such as an unplanned pregnancy, we must use our discretion in recommending only those agencies and services consistent with the teachings of the Church. Call 211 by phone

<https://ne211.org/> (Iowa 211 works in partnership with Nebraska 211)

Nourish Program for Churches helps equip a lay-led team to minister effectively to caregivers for elderly family members with this ongoing, Christ-centered ministry. Cost is \$750 for full package with \$250 yearly renewal; available in English and Spanish. info@nourishforcaregivers.com

The diocesan Coordinator of Persons with Disability Ministry, Patty Origer, has direct experience working with establishing Nourish in parishes. Contact her at 515-237-5073 or poriger@dmdioocese.org.

Red Bird Ministries accompanies individuals and couples through the trauma of the loss of a child, from pregnancy through adulthood. They offer resources for individuals and parish leadership training. <https://www.redbird.love/>

Life-Giving Wounds accompanies adults who are children of divorce, an often-overlooked wound that affects children of any age. Through resources, retreats, and a growing community, Life-Giving Wounds walks with individuals affected by the divorce of their parents. <https://www.lifegivingwounds.org/>

The Third Option is a ministry to assist couples in building communication skills while struggling in their marriages, providing them with practical skills and hope to heal. Couples can join at any time. Free. <https://www.dmdiocese.org/ministries-and-faith-formation/marriage-and-family-life/the-third-option>

Information about the national program can be found at <http://thethirdoption.com/>

Websites

Resources for mental health ministry listed on the diocesan website: <https://www.dmdiocese.org/disabilityministry>

Books

The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work by John Gottman and Nan Silver, New York: Three Rivers Press (2015). <https://www.gottman.com/product/the-seven-principles-for-making-marriage-work/>

How to Heal Your Marriage and Nurture Lasting Love by Greg Popcak Manchester NH: Sophia Institute Press <https://sophiainstitute.com/product/how-to-heal-your-marriage/>

Section 6 Prayer Life: Introducing the Tradition of Catholic Prayer in Households

Those who have deep spiritual aspirations should not feel that the family detracts from their growth in the life of the Spirit, but rather see it as a path which the Lord is using to lead them to the heights of mystical union.

Pope Francis, *On Love in the Family (Amoris Laetitia)*, 316

To be Christian is to be called into a relationship with the living God through the Lord Jesus Christ. This relationship, like all relationships, grows in communication, and hence prayer is a privileged and vital place of encounter with Jesus. These resources are offered to help marriages and families grow in daily communication with God through prayer.

Resources

Websites

Catholic Sprouts is a website that offers many resources to use at home with children of all ages. Created by parents who were looking for ideas and ways to share their faith with their children, this site has books and resources and even a podcast. The free podcast is wonderful for creating a routine with children and having short ways to learn more about the faith. The books and resources are relevant and modern in artwork and topics and help to bring the Catholic faith alive to children. Cost varies, some free. English, some Spanish
Website: <https://catholicssprouts.com/>

CathFamily! offers a collection of resources on varying topics for Catholic parents, regularly updated and relevant to the liturgical season. Free.
Website: <https://cathfamily.org/>

National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry offers various resources for parents of youth on this page of its website. It has links to other resources as well. <https://nfcym.org/programs/strong-catholic-families/leader-parent-resources/>

***CatholicHOM Households on Mission** is an app with a monthly subscription (\$14.95/per month), offering resources to build a domestic church. The website says, “When families do the things God created us to do to be healthy and holy, we worship him with our lives.”

This resource could have relevance to sections two and four of this toolkit. <https://www.catholichom.com/>



Diocese of Des Moines' website offers resources for Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter <https://www.dmdiocese.org/>

Catholic Icing offers resources for sharing and celebrating faith and prayers at home. Crafts, snacks, prayer space, books and activities to engage with children 0–12. Cost varies; some materials are free, some paid, some subscription <https://www.catholicicing.com/>

Apps

Hallow App is a prayer with many resources. They offer a free 14-day trial, subscription is \$9.99/month It is available in English, Spanish, Polish, Portuguese.

Website: Hallow – The #1 Catholic Meditation, Prayer & Sleep App

Amen App is a free app from Ascension Press that has various prayers, podcasts, stories, and content to help build a prayer routine. You can set reminders for your nightly bedtime prayer and meditations to help set a positive sleep routine. Amen (amenapp.org)

YouCat Daily is a free website and app to help keep teens growing in faith with a daily five-minute dose of the Gospel from the Bible and a question regarding catechetical or Catholic social teaching. Includes English, German, Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Polish content. <https://youcat.org/youcat-digital/>

