

Evangelizing Families Today: Engaging Parents As *Partners* in Faith Formation

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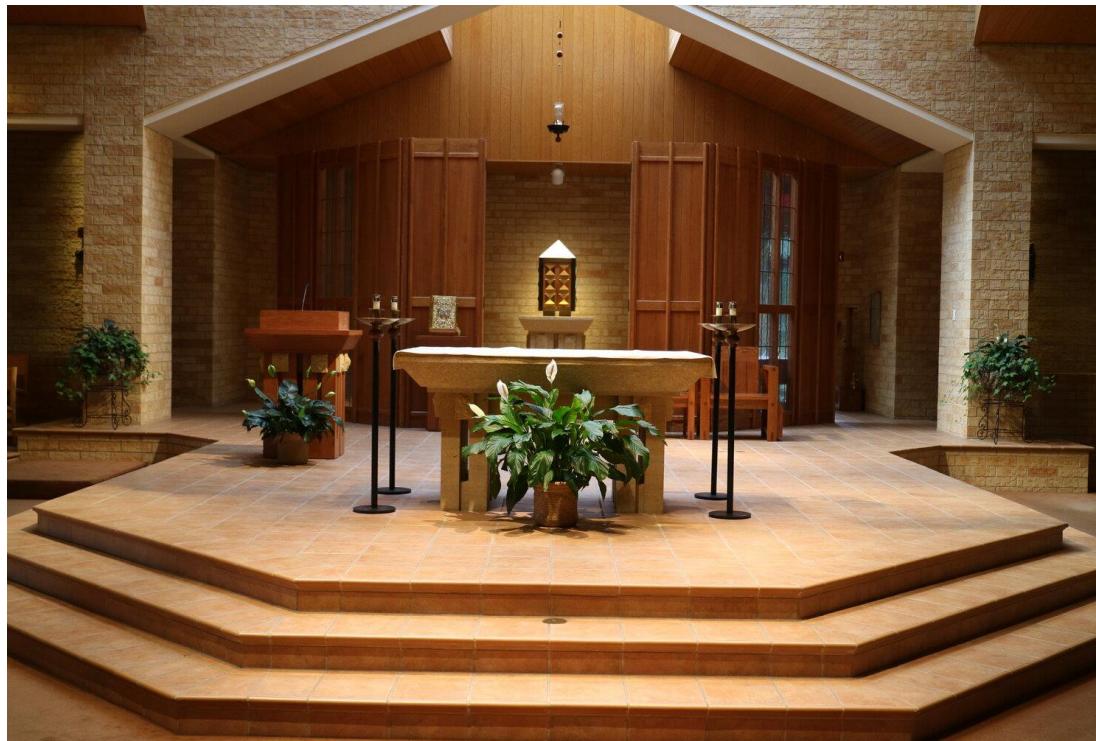
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Paulist Evangelization Ministries

Webinar Series

October 18th, 2022

Norma and Joe



Meet the Quinlans



Meet the Quinlans



Starting Out

- This PowerPoint presentation will be sent to you (if watching live...if not, email me for resources)
- Better parent/family engagement is pertinent for every parish whether 1.) Paradigm shifting or 2.) Enhancing Schooling Model
- Catholic schools need get on this as much as faith formation programs

Active Engagement

- Some suggestions won't apply...but might spark idea/insight elsewhere
- Please imagine differently and beyond me
- Focus on what's *right* with your pastoral situation (and not just what is deficient)
- Don't seize up with overwhelm: Start with 1-2 areas of focus
- Openness to Holy Spirit

Interior Disposition

Attending to the spiritual, emotional, physical
wellness of ...

YOU!

Partnering with Parents: Your Wisdom and Hopes

- How would you describe parents today?
- ***What is your/your parish's most effective practice with families?***
- Name an effective practice from a parish in your diocese.
- ***What is something you would love to begin at your parish with parents and/or families?***
- What prevents this from happening?

The Pastoral Landscape Today

- The full spiritual-religious welfare of parish families must be our focus as catechetical leaders; do not minister in a silo!
- The Church has largely been successful sacramentalizing; far less effective at evangelizing
- Decline in practice well-evidenced; decline now in even seeking sacraments

The Pastoral Landscape Today

- Parents can't give what they don't have; most are candidates for evangelization today
- We must listen, care and get to know them...their hopes, fears, needs and wants...and minister to them where they are (not where we *think* they should be)
- This is a paschal era.

Preeminent Evangelizing Value

**Parent and Family Faith Formation
Must Be At The Service of Fostering**

CONVERSION

Suggestions for Partnering with Parents

- **Utilize Digital Resourcing to Form Parents in Faith**
 - go to *them*, where they live...on their computer, in their smart phone (digital immigrants, enlist help from diocese, others in parish and beyond)
- **Resource Parents in Helpful Ways Beyond Strictly Faith Content**
 - meet their real and felt needs...parenting, marriage, finances, stress-management, etc. (can be integrated with faith)

Suggestions for Partnering with Parents

- **Invite Families to Experience the Parish**
 - devotions, liturgies (Mass, Stations of the Cross, Adoration, Blessing of Pets, etc.), parish happenings (formation, service, social, etc.)
 - don't have to always create new events
- **Use Electronic Communication and Social Media to get the word out**
 - Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, etc., can work!
 - Parish Apps...and old-fashioned email, too

Suggestions for Partnering with Parents

- **Constantly Reinforce the Larger Context in Which Faith Formation Makes Sense**
 - We are called to discipleship lifestyle; “To Know, To Love, To Serve”
 - Have the “evangelizing conversation”; challenge them lovingly to the possibility of “more”
- **Uphold the Values, Drop the Judgment**
 - Condemnatory attitudes and actions are both inappropriate and ineffectual (i.e. Mass attendance)

Suggestions for Partnering with Parents

- **Outreach I: Seek the Marginal and Unaffiliated**
 - Intentional spring/summer outreach to draw families into faith formation
 - September Initiative: outreach continues in Fall!
- **Outreach II: Baptism and Beyond**
 - Create and sustain relationship to parish; encourage faith practice in home and parish while the cement is still wet!
 - The first months/years are our window of relational opportunity

When the Cement is Wet

Six Keys to Evangelizing Baptismal Ministry

There is no more important ministry for a parish to over-haul and *radically* reimagine...if it seeks to attract and accompany young families and grow as a renewing community of faith...than Baptismal Ministry. This means being intentional as a parish from the phone call seeking Baptism through to (hopefully) registration for kindergarten or first grade in the school or parish faith formation. **The cement is wet here at Baptism and in these early years.** Not at First Eucharist and certainly not Confirmation.

1. Understand Baptismal Ministry (before, during and after Baptism) as a primary opportunity to evangelize and foster **conversion** in parents and other family members.

Design every aspect of the ministry upon this primary principle and with missionary intentionality. And pray down the Holy Spirit who brings conversion.



2. Focus on team building and team formation.

Baptismal Ministry should not be seen as the ministry of any particular person(s). It is the ministry of the entire parish community! There are many gifts and charisms present in the people of your parish. And there are a variety of roles needed on any Baptismal Ministry Team. Examples: A single mother on the team should help the ministry be sensitive to the needs of new single moms. You will want people gifted in hospitality and small group facilitation. Who are parishioners gifted with being able to share their own faith journey in a way that will resonate with these parents and evoke a faith response in them? Are there parishioners who can effectively offer a kerygmatic explanation of faith in Jesus Christ that is understandable and attractive...and connect it to Baptism? Find the right mix of gifted people, form them well, empower them as a team and position them for success.

3. Build different tracks; consider requiring participation at more than one session.

There should be one track for first-time parents and at least one different track for others. For example, one track might focus more on core elements of our faith and the baptismal rite itself; one more on things like Catholic parenting and what the parish has to offer families. However, any track should be heavily eucharistic in its focus (as we are hoping to form these young adults to hunger for Jesus in all the ways experienced at the Liturgy of the Eucharist) and designed to foster relationship-building to the community of faith.

Parishes should also consider providing more than one session to parents presenting a child for Baptism, whether additional sessions are required or not. Requiring two quality gathered experiences for parents of a child being baptized gives the parish a better chance of establishing a real relationship with a family, which is a key goal of this ministry. And don't feel timid about asking more of these parents seeking Baptism. Baptism is so theologically significant *and* our best pastoral opportunity with young families!



"There is a pressing need to frame everything in terms of evangelization, as the fundamental principle that guides ecclesial activity as a whole."

Directory for Catechesis, 297

4. Never call them classes or meetings.

Create more of an *evening/morning of formation* or a *retreat* experience and frame it as such. Mix in strong relational interactions with some time for reflective quiet. Get them talking about themselves (and amongst themselves) and be active, caring listeners. Utilize faith witnessing from team member parishioners. Begin any theological input at the place of their lived experience and provide a core, kerygmatic message of Catholic faith that can speak to their lives as *relevant* good news. Don't skimp on the hospitality and humor. Our joy in Christ should radiate. There should be an extravagance in a parish's welcome of a family and/or a new member into its midst. It is a *big* deal to be celebrated!

5. Give families an absolutely tremendous experience of Baptism itself.

Let the sacrament and the community evangelize! Again, generous hospitality and joy should mark the posture of the parish throughout. This is more of a challenge at baptisms performed after Mass rather than during Mass. Suggestions for non-Mass baptisms include: Ask the family to attend the prior Mass (where they will be welcomed warmly, seated up front and given mention during the Mass). Mass-goers are invited to remain for the baptism after Mass. Members of the Baptismal Ministry Team warmly accompany the family/families throughout the experience. At least some baptisms each month should be celebrated during Mass. This has a positive formational impact on the parish community.



6. Develop follow-up ministry for families between Baptism and the school years.

There are countless ways to accomplish this, such as having regular and outreaching communication, assigning a mentoring family for ongoing accompaniment and support, offering Children's Liturgy of the Word, and growing a ministry for mothers. These are *the key years* that will help to determine what kind of relationship the family will have with your parish and with the Church. The future religious identity of these families is likely at stake during this period. Consider the window for Baptismal Ministry to be wide open from 0-5 years of age!

What are the outcomes, the fruitfulness of your parish's Baptismal Ministry? If the ministry is badly languishing (or worse) do not try to merely tweak it. Better to deconstruct it entirely and start from scratch with a vision drawn from New Evangelization and designed for New Pentecost. And this likely means investing in the ministry. This is a ministry of fostering conversion and discipleship, and *nothing* about it should feel like "hoop-jumping".

Where should a parish begin to reimagine and redesign itself in pursuit of evangelizing pastoral renewal? Simple. Start at the beginning. Baptism.

Suggestions for Partnering with Parents

- **Listen To The Person: The Pastoral Role of Catechetical Leaders**
 - Become attentive to what they mean; be intuitive to their needs and care about them; strive to grow in cultural sensitivity
 - ***Transformational*** (not transactional) leadership!
- **Create Opportunities for Parents to Participate (and Be Formed) During Session Time**
 - With their children in class
 - Parents gathered (Lectionary-based faith sharing, video-assisted resources, etc.)

Suggestions for Partnering with Parents

- **Encourage Parents to Be Active in Their Child's Formation at Home**
 - Reinforce their identity as primary catechists
 - Texts need to be sent home and consumed
 - Empower parents to pray with and bless their children; ritualize family faith life
 - Reveal connecting points: Catholic faith and home (i.e. Eucharist and family meal)
- **Coach Them Up**
 - Train them formally to confidently embrace their role as primary catechists

Suggestions for Partnering with Parents

- **Family Faith Totes**

- One bag per grade that rotates among families with special resources (specific to that grade) for parents and family

- **Be Positive**

- Say yes whenever possible...no when necessary
- Affirm positive behaviors and celebrate successes
- Reinforce good outcomes with personal touches
- Nonetheless, accountability is good/necessary

Suggestions for Partnering with Parents

- **Be A Talent (Charism) Scout**
 - Recognize giftedness in parents and call forth their gifts
 - Don't just plug holes
- **Create A Culture of Relationship-Building**
 - An environment where not only leader-parent relationships form but also catechist-parent, parent-parent, etc.
 - One-on-on and group
 - In-person and via digital means

Suggestions for Partnering with Parents

- **Plan and Goal-Set for Parent Partnering**
 - With parish leadership and with parents

Modes for Parent and Family Faith Formation

- Whole community/parish formation events
- Family formation events
- Parent formation sessions
- Parent coaching sessions with children
- Retreats, evenings/mornings of reflection

Modes for Parent and Family Faith Formation

- Regular parish events
- Regional or diocesan events
- Families at home
- Families sent out in service
- Formation content delivered *home* (digital or paper)
- Small faith communities (gathered or virtual)

Occasions for Parent and Family Faith Formation

- Seasons and Feasts
- Ordinary Formation Sessions
- Sacrament Preparation for Parents
- Sacrament Preparation for Families
- Singular (Special) Occasions

Parent Sacrament Formation Gatherings

- **Require attendance**

- Record the session
- Hold parents accountable to view at parish

- **Provide a warm, hospitable experience**

- Not a meeting, an evening of *reflection*, enrichment session or such
- Have a team welcoming and conducting the session (tap giftedness of parishioners)

Parent Sacrament Formation Gatherings

- **Make connections between life and Catholic faith**
 - i.e.) Reconciliation/forgiveness; Eucharist/meal
 - Get them talking...to each other and about selves
 - Address their adult questions of meaning
 - The evocative power of story (Scripture and parent witnesses)
- **Stress the importance of their bringing the faith home to their family**
 - Provide specific, simple, resourced practices

Plan With the End in Mind

What is the goal of parish faith formation ministry for children?

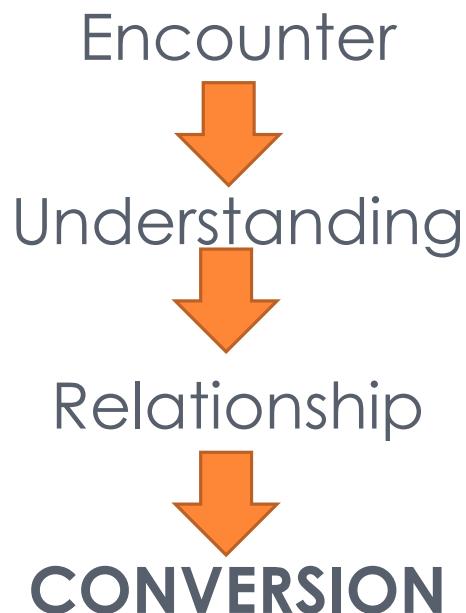
- A simple, profound and essential question for all of parish leadership to examine
- Work backwards from the answer to redesign parish catechesis

The Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)



Emmaus Offers Formative Model

Emmaus Model



Traditional Model



Preeminent Evangelizing Value

Conversion...of the parents first!

- Not just helping them pass on a faith that they don't know or they don't have...that is a sham and doesn't work
- Monumental implications to put this into pastoral-catechetical practice
- At the very heart of the New Evangelization!

Your Hopes for/Commitment to Partnering with Parents

- Reflect and name three things you would love to do in this area.
- What factors limit or prevent these from happening?
- Name one action that you can commit to taking.
- Name one development you will pursue and advocate for in your parish.

For Reflection

- Do people **believe** their way into belonging...or belong their way into believing? (What does this question evoke in you? In the parish staff?)
- What percentage of your ministry is focused on the evangelization and formation of parents? Of the ministry of the parish?
- What percentage of your budget is focused on the evangelization and formation of parents? Of the parish?

For Reflection

- **What percentage of the last parent/family session could be considered evangelizing or designed to foster conversion?**
- Name something in your ministry/in the parish that seems effective in fostering conversion. Why does it seem effective? (Has its efficacy been measured?)
- **How do I perceive parents in the program? How do parents perceive me? (How do they perceive the parish?)**
- Do I encourage and facilitate catechists/other parishioners relating to parents?

For Reflection

- Do I utilize the gifts of strong *role model* parents to help to mentor other parents?
- Do I/the parish foster relationship-building among parents?
- **How well do I resource parents? How do I resource them?**
- Do I seek input from...parents and catechists?

Summary Statement

What...For Whom...When...Why (To What End)

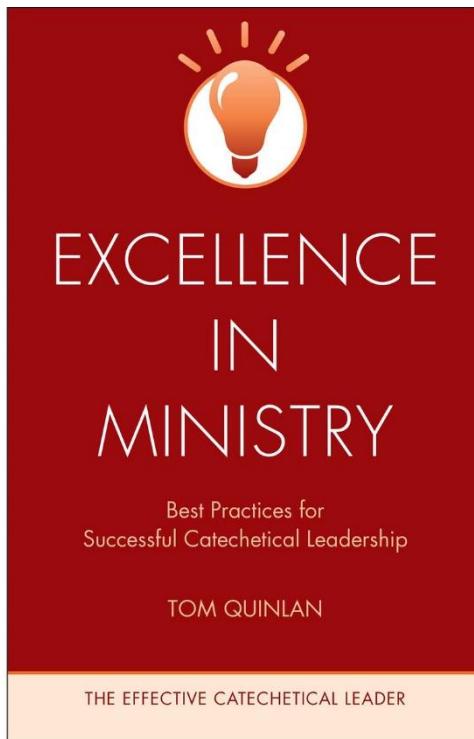
What: *Evangelizing* Catechesis

For Whom: Emphasis on *Parents*

When: *Early!* Front-loaded Ministry

Why: To Foster *Conversion* (Form Disciples)

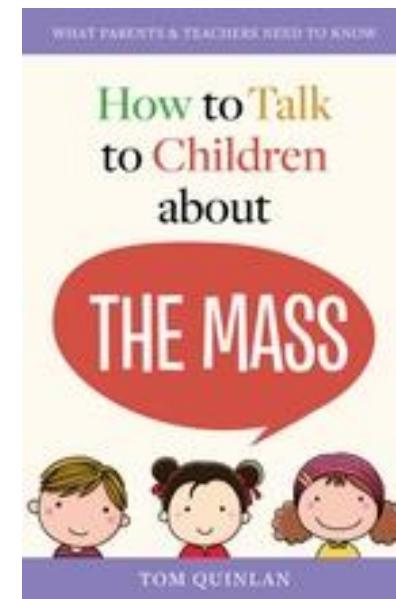
The Effective Catechetical Leader Series – Loyola Press



Eucharist Resources

- **How to Talk to Children About the Mass**

(Twenty-Third Publications, 2017)



- **Eucharist: Group Reading Guide**

(Twenty-Third Publications, 2019)

Webinar Handouts

- PowerPoint for this Webinar
- Six Keys to Evangelizing Baptismal Ministry
- Parent Sacrament Formation: Prime Parish Evangelizing Opportunity
- Adult Gatherings That Engage (Ch. 7 wksh)
- Evangelizing Young Families (Ch. 9 wksh)

Webinar Handouts

- The Path of Joy for Your Child...and You!
- Bringing Infants and Toddlers to Mass

Please share with others...

Family Formation Resources

Diocese of Des Moines Family Faith Resources

- dmdioocese.org/ministries-and-faith-formation/religious-education/parent-tools/family-faith-resources
- bit.ly/3vz50Bf

Family Formation Websites

- catholicfamilyfaith.org
- pastoral.center
- loyolapress.com
- teachingcatholickids.com
- crs.org
- fashioningfaith.org
- lifelongfaithstudio.com
- teacherspayteachers.com

Connecting with Me

- tomquinlan@evangelizingcatechesis.org
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- **LinkedIn**
- **YouTube** – search “evangelizing catechesis”
(parent formation and parish catechetical
leadership channels)

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