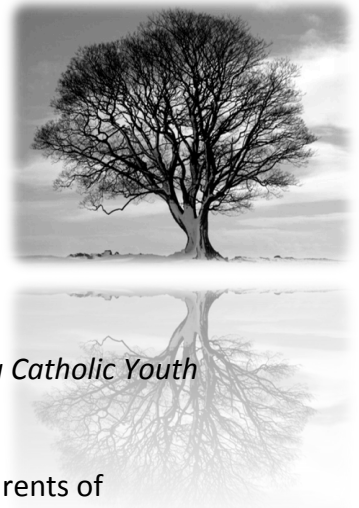




# ***Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth*** **Program Content**



## **The Audience:**

The recommended audience for sessions of the *Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth* in-service are:

1. Parent Session:
  - a. parents of youth in a pilot parish; while primarily designed for parents of younger and older adolescents, this session is also helpful for parents of younger children (e.g. parents of children celebrating First Reconciliation or Eucharist)
  - b. parish leaders from throughout diocese (e.g. pastors, youth ministry leaders, catechetical leaders)
  - c. prospective trainers who will lead Parent Sessions in the diocese in the future
2. Parish Leadership Session:
  - a. parish leaders from throughout diocese (e.g. pastors, youth ministry leaders, catechetical leaders)
  - b. prospective trainers who will lead Parent Sessions in the diocese in the future
3. Train-the-Trainers Session: prospective trainers who will lead Parent Sessions in the diocese in the future

## **Parent Session:**

The Parent Session is designed to be a motivational experience that engages parents in examining the hopes and priorities they hold for their families. Parents will be presented with the core findings from the National Study on Youth and Religion that are particularly relevant to them in their role as parents:

1. Parents are the most significant influence on the faith lives of their children.
2. Faith and religion are good for youth. (Many positive outcomes are connected with engagement in religious activities.)
3. The Catholic Church did worse than all other religious traditions on many measures of youth and family religiosity. The faith traditions that have anchored faith in the home have done better on these measures of religious involvement.

The presenter will explain to parents how we as Catholics have been shaped by our history, a history in which parents were taught to delegate responsibility for their children's faith growth to church leaders and programs. These concepts will be presented without a sense of blame or shame, but rather affirmation for parents and a positive outlook on what can be done in the future.

Parents will then be engaged in an examination of the hopes they have for their children and the priorities they set for their families. The session invites parents to take stock and consider how they nurture their own faith lives. Specific suggestions are shared with parents to help them share faith at home and make or keep religion as a priority for their family.

NOTE: The pilot parish (and all parishes who sponsor a future Parent Session) may choose to host a follow-up session for their parents. This follow-up session will focus on how the Church can help parents to anchor faith in their homes.

### **Parish Leadership Session:**

The Parish Leadership Session begins with a review of what was shared in the Parent Session. (This helps parish leaders who were unable to attend the Parent Session to understand some of the basic premises of the session.)

The remainder of the session is a process that engages teams of parish leaders in a facilitated dialogue to address the question: “As a parish staff, what do we do with this?” The Parish Leadership Session helps parish leaders understand that as a church we have structured parish life to reinforce the default position in which parents delegate the faith development of their children to the parish catechetical program. The session encourages parish leaders to shift their paradigm for parish life from a parish catechetical program-centered model to a model in which the domestic church is at the center.

Parish leaders will be lead through an assessment of sacraments through the lens of the consumer-provider model of parish life. (Parish is the provider of sacraments, dispensing “moments” to parishioner-consumers who have met certain requirements.) Parish teams will then be encouraged to dialogue about what their parish life would look like if families were at the center of the sacramental system. This dialogue hopes to inspire a radical re-thinking of our sacramental economy so as to shift from parishes that provide sacramental moments to parishes that support families in sacramental living.

Parish staff teams will engage in conversation about how their parish ministries can be re-focused to support, develop and resource the domestic church. Parish leaders will be encouraged to take steps to intentionally examine their underlying assumptions about parish life and ministry and our habitual ways of acting as a church. Practical strategies will be shared with participants to help them take the first steps in promoting this paradigm shift.

### **Train-the-Trainers Session:**

Potential trainers, invited by diocesan leadership, will be trained to replicate the Parent Session in parishes throughout the diocese. Trainers will be provided with the resources they will need to do this (e.g. outline, PowerPoint session, etc.). Trainers will also be oriented and prepared to facilitate one follow-up session for a parish after the initial Parent Session.

### **Considerations for Diocesan Leadership:**

Diocesan leaders need to collaborate to plan how to carry this initiative forward in their diocese. These leaders will need to be prepared to be consultants for parish communities who engage in this process and need ongoing support, direction and resources for anchoring faith development in the domestic church. Trainers will be prepared to lead a Parent Session and one follow-up session, but will not necessarily be prepared to provide ongoing consultation.