



Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth **Diocesan Coordinators' Guide**



Thank you for your commitment to developing strong Catholic families and youth. *The Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth* in-services and resources are designed to (a) motivate parents to take responsibility for the faith development of their children, and (b) to motivate parishes to support and equip parents and families in passing the faith to their children. Here's a table of contents to assist you in finding important information in this guide:

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Vision, Outcomes and Overview of In-Services

Here's a snapshot of the vision of *Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth*:

- A national presenter offers three consecutive in-services, one for parents, a second for parish and diocesan leadership, and a third for presenters – and diocesan leaders receive the PowerPoint presentations and related materials for all three for use in their diocese.
- The locally trained presenters will then offer the parent presentation to the parents and parishes of your diocese, designed as a powerful motivational message to parents urging them to take responsibility for the faith of their children.
- Diocesan leaders can use the parish leader presentation to create a similar sense of urgency about equipping parents for their indispensable role in forming the faith of their children.
- Follow-up materials are available to build on these sessions.
- Your diocese becomes a part of a growing network of Catholic dioceses across the United States, sharing ideas, wisdom, resources and best practices.

Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth is not so much a program as a launch pad for a diocesan-wide effort. Those dioceses that understand this and prepare for this effort are those best positioned to utilize the *Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth* resources to their greatest effect.

It's important to be clear at the outset that although these materials focus primarily on the in-services NFCYM will be offering your diocese, their ultimate usefulness to your people will depend on your advance preparations not only for the in-services, but *especially for what happens afterwards*. The in-services are designed to launch a diocesan-wide process that will entail offering the parent presentation to parishes, organizing further training and networking for your local presenters, orchestrating presentations with parishes, and using the parish staff in-service to spread the word to pastors, parishes and deaneries. Thus there are two major tasks for diocesan leadership:

- 1. Preparing for the in-services; and**
- 2. Preparing for what will happen after the in-services** (so that ideally you can announce your detailed plans for next steps at the in-services).

To accomplish these aims you need to develop an interdisciplinary diocesan implementation team composed of leaders from Youth Ministry, Religious Education, Family Life and perhaps other departments such as Schools and Vocations. It will be the task of this implementation team both to prepare for the in-services and to develop a diocesan system for managing all the follow-up efforts. We've learned that dioceses that focus solely on the in-services are far less likely to benefit from the in-services and all the resource materials that come along with them.

Anticipated outcomes of *Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth* are:

1. Diocesan leadership unified on the importance of the central role of parents and families in the faith formation of children and adolescents, and motivated to assess and adjust their assumptions and practices accordingly;
2. Parish leaders motivated to assess their assumptions and practices through the lenses of current research and to implement parent- and family-centered approaches to faith formation;
3. Parents motivated to assess their current family faith practices and to make decisions for greater ownership of and involvement in the faith formation of their children.

The typical format of the in-services is as follows and can be adapted to better respond to particular diocesan needs and wishes:

Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth In-Services Overview*

1. **Evening of Day 1:** a two-hour *Parent Session* (typically 6:30-8:30pm or 7:00-9:00pm) at a “pilot parish” (a parish that is interested in leading the way in this process). Those who have been recruited to learn how to present the Parent Session (see Afternoon of Day 2, below) in the diocese will also be in attendance to observe, along with other interested diocesan and parish leaders. It can be helpful to schedule the Parent Session as a mandatory parent meeting as part of a parish’s Sacramental preparation program, and also make it broadly available to other parents, grandparents and interested adults.
2. **Morning of Day 2:** a three-hour *Parish Leader Session* from 9:00am-noon (with lunch following if desired). This session is directed towards parish and diocesan leaders *including and especially pastors*. Those planning to attend are urged to attend the Parent Session the night before. Those who have been recruited to present the Parent Session in the diocese should be in attendance as well. Note: three full hours of presentation/process time is needed for this session.
3. **Afternoon of Day 2:** a three-hour *Training of Presenters Session*, typically 1:00pm – 4:00pm (after lunch). This session is for those who have been recruited to present the Parent Session in the diocese, along with the diocesan leaders who will coordinate the follow-up activities in the diocese. (*Important: In three hours we can orient your presenters to the parent presentation, however it would be unrealistic to expect this session to impart the skills of effective public speaking or delivering an effective PowerPoint presentation. It is strongly recommended that you recruit presenters who already have these skills. Those who do not will need significantly more preparation before they’re ready to deliver the Parent Session.*)
4. **Follow Up with Diocesan Team:** The national trainer will meet with the diocesan team during or after the training, or soon thereafter via conference call to debrief the experience and to discuss next steps.

**We suggest this two-day format, but a one-day Saturday model is also available (Parent Session 9:00-11:00 am, Parish Leader Session from 11:00-2:00 pm (including lunch), Training of Presenters Session from 2:00-5:00 pm). Some dioceses have scheduled additional parent and leadership sessions to accommodate geographical and scheduling challenges. Additional sessions will necessitate additional fees.*

The goals of these in-service sessions are to:

1. Model and train your presenters so they can provide high-impact Parent Sessions throughout your diocese;
2. Develop a sense of urgency among parish and diocesan leaders so they will be motivated not only to bring the parent presentation to their parishes, but also to examine their own assumptions and practices and consider making changes;
3. Provide resources to help parish leaders to equip parents for their indispensable role in forming the faith of their children; and
4. Launch a diocesan-wide effort, using the *Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth* presentations and materials along with other available resources, to place and keep parents and families at the center of your pastoral planning and faith formation programming.



General Information for the Diocesan Host/Coordinator



Supporting parents in their role as primary formators-of-faith has the potential to transform ministry within your diocese. In this light, NFCYM offers the following recommendations to diocesan leaders in coordinating the process.

1. **Do This Collaboratively.** Begin the *Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth* planning process by engaging in a dialogue at the diocesan level with other departments/offices that deal with faith formation and families in order to build a collaborative strategy for partnering with parents through the religious education, youth ministry and family life ministries of the diocese. It is most effective if a diocesan team can be formed from early on.
2. **Engage the Bishop, Clergy, Pastoral Administrators and Deacons in the Process.** Invite all clergy to attend the Parent Session and/or the morning Parish Leader Session. Ideally, those who attend the Parish Leader Session also attend the Parent Session the evening before.
 - Seek their assistance as you promote participation by parish leadership in all ministries, given that all parish staff serves families and youth.
 - Request that the Bishop encourage the priests to attend and invite him to stop by or attend the Parent and/or Parish Leader Sessions.
3. **Recruit Pilot Parishes.** Invite specific parishes in each area of your diocese to become pilot parishes that commit to attending the Parent Session and Parish Leader Session with their pastor and parish staff, and then engage in the ongoing and dynamic process of supporting, empowering and partnering with parents. It is also helpful to have many of your local presenters come from these pilot parishes. These parishes will serve as models of the process of implementation throughout the diocese and serve as a resource to other parishes who begin the SCF process. A suggested template for recruiting these parishes is included in the appendix (see p. 15). Your ongoing dialogue with these parishes will allow the diocese to more clearly identify the resources needed for all parishes and to highlight the blessings for parishes which adopt this paradigm of partnering with parents in formation.
4. **Recruit Local Presenters.** Presenters for the Parent Sessions should be recruited from various ministry areas prior to the in-service. After the training, presenters will serve as a resource to the local diocese, and should be available for local presentations including:
 - parent meetings in conjunction with sacramental preparation
 - in-services for parish and school leaders
 - PTO (Parent-Teacher Organization) gatherings
 - Special parish programs

Presenter competencies include: collaborative approach to ministry; engaging style with parents and parish leadership; strong public speaking capabilities; skilled in presenting with PowerPoint; expertise – or the commitment to develop it – with the session materials and the research they're based on. (*Important: the Training of Presenters in-service can reasonably impart only a working familiarity with the Parent Session. Expert ability in public speaking, PPT presentations, and command of the research will need to be developed outside of the in-service.*)

- Presenters are required to attend all three of the in-services, including the special Training of Presenters session.
 - In order to develop sufficient command of the research to competently present it, presenters need to read *Soul Searching* and *Souls in Transition* (by Christian Smith, Oxford University Press, 2005 and 2009 respectively), ideally prior to the Training of Presenters session. You may choose to start a weekly chapter review among the presenters so these books can be digested and discussed ahead of time. Another excellent related resource on the NSYR is *Almost Christian* by Kenda Creasy Dean.
 - Fewer but more experienced presenters (rather than one in every parish) are recommended initially. Additional presenters can be brought on later once the program takes root and parent program demand increases.
 - There are strong advantages to recruiting presenters from a variety of ministries to assist in establishing the collaborative nature of this venture.
 - Presenters will normally receive a stipend from parishes for their presentations, in keeping with local norms for such presentations. Presentations are normally 90-120 minutes in length.
 - Things to consider before promoting your local presentations: fees covering the costs of presenters and materials, costs of promotional materials, and a system that parishes can use to request a Parent Session.
5. **Highlight Local Resources.** During the Parent and Parish Leader sessions, invite a representative of the diocesan library or media center to be present with materials that might be helpful to parishes and parents as they go deeper in this process.
 6. **Videotape the Initial Parent and Parish Leader Sessions for Training Purposes.** Dioceses may wish to videotape the national trainer sessions for later training purposes.
 7. **Program Recommendations for Parish Host Sites.** Make sure all parishes hosting a SCF program, especially the one hosting the first Parent Session, receives the document “D-2: Host Parish Program Instructions and Follow-Up Process” which leads them through the SCF three-step process.
 8. **Develop Your Follow-Up Plans for Parishes.** Several follow-up programs/sessions for parish and diocesan staff are included in the appendix and under “Additional Resources” on the discreet website. Additional sessions might include:
 - Sharing of strategies for engaging parents that are working well in their parishes.
 - Exploring some best practices and resources from around the country with the parish leaders, giving them some new potential ‘next steps’ as they move through the process.
 - Provide parent resources for parishes that they can customize and personalize.
 9. **Provide Promotional Materials.** A sample Bulletin Announcement for parishes hosting a Strong Catholic Families Parent Session is below and the appendix contains a flyer template.

“Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth”

The research on teens and faith cannot be clearer: parents matter... a lot!

_____ (parish name) is renewing our partnership with parents as we support your role as primary in growing faith within your family. Learn more about how parents can lead their children and teens toward a vibrant faith that embraces discipleship. Join other parents as we work together to bring the ‘good news’ to life around our family tables on _____ (insert session date, time & location).



Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth Task Timeline

This is a checklist of tasks that should be completed in the order they are listed. Some tasks refer to additional information found in this document. Your assigned trainer will review this list with you and your team via a phone call. Please feel free to contact your trainer at any time with questions you have regarding any steps in this process.

Twelve to Six Months Out: (preferably before or immediately after contracting with NFCYM)

- **Begin a collaborative effort** by inviting other diocesan departments/offices to partner with you in hosting the SCF program (especially Family Life, Religious Education and Youth Ministry). This is a critical step at the beginning especially regarding scheduling the in-services and appealing to the broadest potential constituencies.
- **Review the Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth program with your bishop** and invite him to be present for the program (either the Parent Session or Parish Leader Session, or both).
- **Develop a diocesan team** that collaboratively will be responsible not only for planning and implementing the in-services, but also to develop a system for bringing the parent presentation to parishes across the diocese. Ideally this team will have representatives from various diocesan offices and departments that have responsibility for faith formation, family life and youth ministry, along with other diocesan offices that may have interest and a stake in the future of faith formation in the diocese. As with any team, there will need to be a primary leader or convener who will serve not only to call meetings, develop agendas and keep tasks on track in the diocese, but will also serve as the diocese's principal contact with the NFCYM.
- **Contact your assigned national trainer** to get familiarized with this document and information available on the discrete website. Ideally this orientation would take place in a conference call with the other diocesan team members present. Some dioceses have done this with a laptop, internet connection and LCD projector, while the SCF trainer remotely by phone walks the whole group through the materials. Suggestion: set up a periodic schedule of phone calls with the national trainer to check in, perhaps every few months.
- **Consult the "Wisdom on the Website"** by reviewing comments from other diocesan leaders who have had the Strong Catholic Families in-services in their dioceses (found in document Pre2: Diocesan Leader Survey Responses) .

Four to Six Months Out:

- **Plan for the in-services**, including timing, site, fees, materials, etc. As noted above, some dioceses plan for multiple parent, parish leader and/or presenter sessions in order to accommodate the unique scheduling challenges and geography of their dioceses.
- **Plan for Implementation after the in-services**, including (a) how the diocese will further train and organize its presenters after the in-service; (b) developing a marketing plan and

promotional materials (note: templates for promotional materials are provided); (c) developing a system of managing Parent and Parish Leadership presentations after the in-services. Consider how a parish will request a presenter, what stipend (if any) is paid, if the diocese will purchase bulk quantities of the resource booklets/prayer cards for resale, etc... Your plan will need to be presented during the Parish Leadership and Training of Presenters sessions. Be sure to include provisions for further training and supervision that you'll require so that your presenters are well-prepared before heading out to parishes representing your diocese. Consider how you will use not only the Parent Session but also the Parish Leader Session in parishes, parish clusters, deaneries, vicariates, etc.

- **Establish a budget for (a) the in-services, and (b) your follow-up efforts.** The budget ought to include expenses and a fee structure for the in-services, as well as all the costs and fees related to implementing *Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth* in your diocese, including promotional materials, administrative support, stipends for local presenters, etc.
- **Secure the host site(s)** for the pilot Parent Session (session 1) and the Parish Leader Session and / Training of Presenters Session (sessions 2 and 3). Review document D-2 with the staff of host facilities (D-2: Host Parish Instructions and Follow-Up Process).
- **Invite priests directly**, preferably through the bishop's office.
- **Develop promotional materials** using the templates and bulletin announcements in this document as well as examples found on the website. Promote the in-services as broadly as possible to parish leadership and diocesan leadership.

Three Months Out

- **Recruit those who will present the Parent Session in your diocese**, including but not necessarily limited to the ministry areas that make up your SCF team (Youth Ministry, Family Life, Religious Education, etc. Important: in order for them to present the Parent Session competently and responsibly, they will need to become thoroughly familiar with the initial and longitudinal findings of the *National Study of Youth and Religion* (NSYR), published in *Soul Searching* and *Souls in Transition* (both by Christian Smith and published by Oxford University Press, 2005 and 2009, respectively). Ideally presenters will have read these two books prior to the Training of Presenters Session (session 3); they definitely will need to read them prior to presenting Parent Sessions so they can respond to questions about the research accurately and confidently).
- **Recruit pilot parishes** that will commit to attending both the Parent and Parish Leader Sessions, ideally with their entire pastoral staff. Pilot parishes will serve as models for other parishes after the in-services and ought to be willing and able to host parent presentations and open to considering other kinds of follow-up. Ideally the parish hosting the initial Parent Session should be a pilot parish. (See general information above for more on pilot parishes.)
- **Meet with the staff of the parish host site** and review the "*Recommendations for the Parish/School Host Site*" and the "*Follow-Up Session for Parish Staff*" documents located in this packet. In addition, walk through the set-up of the upcoming Parent Session and review the supplies that are needed (data projector, power cords, 7' or larger screen or white wall area in center of presentation area, plus a podium and microphone).

Two Months Out

- **Plan for on-site coordination** of registration, hospitality, meals and environment as needed at each venue.
- **Arrange for a representative of the (arch)diocesan library or media center** to be present at the parish leader/training of the presenters sessions with recommended materials for parishes and parents.
- **If you wish to have the Parent and/or Parish Leader Sessions videotaped** for the team of local presenters to refer to, make arrangements with a videographer.

One Month Out

- **Arrange for lodging, meals, and ground transportation** for the in-services trainer.
- **Prepare the resources required for each of the sessions** as outlined in this document and on the discreet website including assembling the Presenter Manuals.
- **Order any additional Family Faith Resource Booklets and Prayer Cards** that you will want to distribute during the in-services.
- **Prepare the post training promotional materials** that you'll use to market your in-service Parent Presentations after the training so they are available at all the in-service sessions.
- **Photocopy your Plan for Implementation after the In-Service** (see item above – 4-6 mos. out) so you can provide copies of your plan to your presenters as part of their orientation at the Train the Presenters session.
- **Establish your administrative structure** to acknowledge and respond to requests for parent and/or parish leader presentations, to schedule presenters for those sessions, to secure evaluations of those sessions and to organize further follow-up efforts.

Week of In-Services

- **Invite the Diocesan Team to be available to meet with trainer** to review next steps either during or soon after the training of the presenter's session.
- **Reimburse trainer** for airfare/other out of pocket expenses on the day of training or the week following.
- **Enter the contact information** for all local presenters and diocesan coordinators on the spreadsheet provided on the website and return it to Michael Theisen at NFCYM.
- **Submit a check request** for the remainder of the in-service payment to NFCYM.
- **Contact Michael Theisen** to offer a summary evaluation of the in-services (via phone 202-674-4209 or e-mail: miket@nfcym.org)

Within Two Weeks After In-Services

- **Implement marketing plan, including** the Parish Information Flyer (D-1 on discreet website) to parish leaders. Offer to review the Strong Catholic Families process at vicariates, regions and other gatherings of parish priests, staffs, catechetical leaders, youth ministry and family life leaders. Plan to use the Parish Leader Session ppt and related materials (E-3 and E-4).
- **Manage requests for parent and parish leader presentations,** including scheduling presenters, communication, providing parishes with marketing materials, etc.
- **Meet as a Diocesan Team** to monitor progress, evaluate, problem-solve, develop new materials, and build on the foundation you've laid. Establish regular meeting times, perhaps monthly or every six weeks,
- **Follow-up with local presenters** to provide further training as needed, to evaluate their work, to offer encouragement and support, and to learn what they're learning so as to fine-tune.

Two Weeks to Six Months After In-Services

- **Implement your Follow-Up Plans** by scheduling Parent and Parish Leader Sessions, completing the training of your Parent Session presenters, administering Parent and Parish Leader Sessions (including evaluating them and offering feedback to your presenters).
- **Meet as a Diocesan Team** as needed to sustain momentum, problem-solve and fine-tune your efforts.
- **Use Follow-Up Materials** provided with the SCF package, and develop more of your own.
- **Identify and Publicize Best Practices** that parishes develop in response to the in-services and subsequent Parent and Parish Leader Sessions. Commend and celebrate parishes that pioneer fresh, creative and fruitful ways to place parents and families at the center of their faith formation and parish life. Develop a network of idea sharing and celebrating victories.

Six to Twelve Months after In-Services

- **Host a Gathering of Local Presenters and Parish Leaders** who have hosted the SCF presentations to further gather wisdom about what is working effectively and to discuss any changes/additions. Repeat this process annually, or as frequently as is helpful.
- **Incorporate workshops and formation sessions** on parent engagement, family prayer skills, the Strong Catholic Family process, etc... in diocesan sponsored conferences, catechist training programs and other formational opportunities offered regularly within the diocese.



Preparation of Resources by Diocesan Host

Prepare the resources required for each of the in-service sessions. All resources are on the discreet website.

1. Parent Session

- A1 - Parent to Parish Response Form – one per person
 - A2 - *Family Faith Resource Booklet - one per family, parish leader and trainers
 - A3 - *Table Tent Prayer and Blessing Cards – one per family, parish leader and trainers
 - * *Note: Fifty copies of these two * resources will be provided to the host as part of the program fee. Additional ones can be ordered at a discounted price from the NFCYM Store (go to: <https://store.nfcymoffice.net/shop/pc/home.asp>. Please be sure orders are made at least three weeks in advance so they arrive in time for the session.*
- Permission to reproduce these documents in **black and white** locally is granted to participating dioceses and their institutions that use this program. Color copies must be purchased through the NFCYM store.

2. Parish Leader Session

- E-mail in advance to all attending the Parish Leader Session the pdf of the article “*Forming Young Disciples: Are We Asking the Right Questions*” along with any other necessary logistical information.
- B1 - Copy of each of the resources from the Parent Session if they do not yet have one.
 - B2 - Parish Leader PowerPoint slide handout pdf - one per person (check with your trainer to see which version should be copied and when it is handed out).
 - B3 - Parish Promotional Flyer – one per person
 - B4 – Diocesan Leader Follow-Up – one for each diocesan leader on coordinating team.
 - B5 - Session Evaluation Form – one per person

3. Training of the Presenters Session

- NOTE: those marked with an * in this section should be copied double sided and assembled in a three-ring binder in the order in which they are listed.
- C1 - Parent Session (Foundational) PowerPoint – trainers should be given the discreet website password to download this ppt directly onto their computer
 - C2 - *Presenter’s Manual
 - C3 - *Parent Session Slide Handouts
 - C4 - * Parent Sessions Notes Page
 - C5 – Resource Price List Flyer

4. Material for Parish Hosts

*The material in this section is for the local trainers to use when they do a parent session in a parish. These items should be downloaded directly by each local trainer and distributed by them to parish leadership accordingly. **Local trainers should not give parish leaders access codes to the discreet website.***

5. Follow Up Resources for Diocesan Coordinating Team

Diocesan coordinators should follow the steps outlined in this section after the in-service has been completed.

Appendix



Diocesan Promo Template for Promoting the SCF Program to Parish/School Leaders

(Also Check the SCF Discreet Website (Right Hand Column)

for Promo Flyers Developed by Other Dioceses



The research on teens and faith cannot be clearer: parents matter... a lot! To help parishes more successfully engage and support parents in passing on our Catholic faith, **(Name of Diocese)** is inviting all parish leaders to help us in building...

Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth



Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth is a strategic process designed to equip parish leaders in empowering and supporting parents in leading their children and teens toward a vibrant faith that embraces discipleship. This process provides an excellent perspective of empowering parents and families that can be incorporated into all of parish life, particularly sacramental preparation, adult and child faith formation, as well as all parish ministries.

The two parts to this in-service include a two-hour evening Parent Session and a half day Parish Leader Session. Parish leaders are urged to attend both parts of this in-service to gain the full effect of the strategic dynamic that is involved.

Parent Session (Date, time, location)

- A two-hour parent program designed to model for parish leaders how their parish can pastorally engage and partner with parents in the lifelong process of faith formation.

Parish Leader Session (Date, time, location)

- A half-day in-service for parish leaders which uses a change management strategy to critically examine the traditional faith formation system while highlighting a strategic process for moving toward an engaged partnership with parents in living and sharing the Catholic faith at home and through the life and mission of the parish community

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Who Should Attend?

Pastors, Pastoral leaders, Religious Education and Youth Ministry Coordinators, Family Life Ministers, Pastoral Council Leaders, Key Catechists, Catholic School Administrators and H.S. Campus Ministers. Anyone who works with parents and youth.

(Insert presenter information)

Registration Information



Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth is developed by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, Washington, DC

Parish Promo Template for Promoting the SCF Program to Parents
(Also Check the SCF Discreet Website (Right Hand Column)
for Promo Flyers Developed by Other Dioceses



Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth

***The research on teens and faith cannot be clearer:
parents matter... a lot!***

What is the Church doing to engage and partner with parents in supporting them in their rightful role as primary formators of faith for their family? What can parents do to take ownership for leading their children toward a vibrant faith that embraces discipleship?

**Come find the answers on
Insert Date, Time & Location**

Join together with Insert presenter information as we...

Communicate the reality of current religious beliefs, attitudes and activities of teens today using contemporary research which highlights the critical impact of the parents' faith, beliefs and actions on that of their children/teens.

Examine the level of partnership between parents, school and faith formation programs

Listen to parents hopes, needs and concerns concerning the faith formation of their children/teens and how the parish/school can support them in their efforts.

Create opportunities to seek new ways to begin forming children and teens in their Catholic faith.

Illustrate practical ideas, strategies and resources for family faith growth and to assist parents in assessing individual and family faith needs via a family faith formation plan designed to lead them to deeper faith growth and involvement.

(Insert Presenter Information and Registration Information if Needed)



Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth is developed by the
National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, Washington, DC

Template for Recruiting Pilot Parishes for the Strong Catholic Families Program



Pilot Parish Description and Expectations

A Pilot Parish is a parish willing to engage and invest as a parish for the long term in adopting the Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth process of engaging, empowering and partnering with parents and families within faith formation and throughout parish life.

Expectations of Pilot Parishes:

- Attendance of pastor and faith formation staff at the Parent Session and at the Parish Leader training on (insert date)
- By (insert date 2 weeks from time of parish leader in-service) the parish will schedule a Parent Session to be held before (insert date that allows parishes some planning & flexibility, but creates a deadline)
- Commitment to ongoing process and dialogue with the Office of Insert office name

Expectations of the Diocesan Office (insert name of coordinating office)

- Office will provide resources and support as needs arise
- Personal follow up from office within one month of Parent Session (scheduled at the same time parish schedules the Parent Session):
 - Minimum of 1 hour, can be adjusted to meet needs of parish
 - Youth ministry coordinator/director to attend; Pastor and Faith Formation staff strongly encouraged to be part of this meeting as well.
- Commitment to ongoing process, dialogue and sharing of best practices with other parishes.

Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth Pilot Parish Response Form

Our parish would like to commit to journeying with the Diocese as a “Pilot Parish” for *Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth*. We understand that this commitment includes involvement of our youth minister, our religious education/faith formation minister, and our pastor in this ongoing process.

Parish Name: _____

Contact Person: _____ Phone #: _____

Email address: _____

Preferred Dates for hosting the *Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth* program:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Insert Return Address/Fax Information Here



Are You Ready to Build Strong Catholic Families and Strong Catholic Youth? ...Then Let's Get Started!

Building Strong Families from the Ground Up

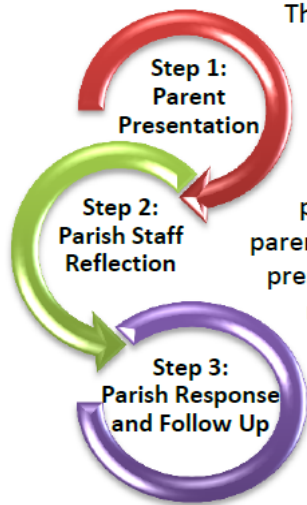
All across the United States, pastors and parish leaders are asking for effective ways to engage parents in the life and mission of the parish as well as seeking ways to help them take ownership as the primary leader of faith within their families. Instead of throwing our collective arms up in the air in despair, we invite you to consider a dynamic grassroots process designed to reach out to parents in a way that empowers and challenges them to form Strong Catholic Families.



What is Strong Catholic Families About?

Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth is a cyclic parish process that engages parents in reflecting, assessing and actively sharing with parish leaders the specific support and formation they need to form their families in the Catholic faith.

How Does it Work?



The Strong Catholic Families process is made up of three distinct steps that are repeated annually in a parish...

Step 1 begins with a two hour presentation and dialogue with parents by a diocesan-trained presenter, who uses contemporary research from the *National Study of Youth and Religion* combined with engaging visuals and pertinent stories to help parents understand the vital dynamic that faith plays in their children's lives and

the critical role that parents uniquely possess in how that faith is experience and lived out. During this session, there is time for parents to react to what they hear, discuss in small and large groups what they want to do about it, and express to parish leaders what support they need in order to take their next steps as a family. The session ends with parents completing a needs assessment that is given to parish leaders who follow-up with next steps.

Step 2 involves the parish staff reading and reflecting on what the parents needs are and, using an outline provided along with follow-up resources, discern as a team how to best support the parents in achieving their goals of growing in faith as a family.

Step 3 is comprised of the follow-up responses by the parish which may take one or several different forms depending upon the expressed needs of the parents. Printed and online resources, parent websites and suggested follow-up sessions are provided to the parish staff as they consider the most effective ways to continue their journey with parents in strengthening the faith within the home. Follow up sessions include extended and focused parent listening sessions, home-based scripture and faith sharing skills, and fun and engaging parent-teen programs.

Who Should Be Invited?

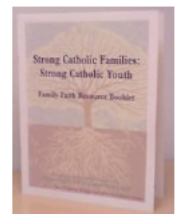
It is highly recommended that the Strong Catholic Families process become part of a parish's annual sacramental preparation process, collectively bringing together parents whose children are involved in Baptism, Eucharist, Reconciliation and Confirmation. This allows the parish to model for parents that these Sacraments indeed initiate an individual into a *life of faith*, not just a moment of faith. It also helps to create a supportive network of parents who quickly learn from one another that growth in faith is a lifelong journey and one that is nurtured most fully in the home.

What Is the Cost?



Besides the presenters' initial stipend (if applicable), there is very minimal cost for this program because *the Diocese has already purchased the copyright*

permissions for you to use every year! A parish may choose to purchase professionally printed copies of the *Family Faith Resource Booklet* and table tent prayer cards which each family receives during the initial parent session, but permission is also granted for these resources to be copied locally as needed so the actual cost is really set by each parish depending upon the extent of follow-up options and resources you provide.



How Did This Develop?

The *Strong Catholic Families* initiative was developed by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM) and is presented nationally in partnership with the National Conference for Catechetical Leadership (NCCL) and the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers (NACFLM).

Contact the Diocese to Get Started Building Strong Catholic Families Today!



Follow-Up Session for Diocesan Staff

Following is a template for a follow-up gathering with diocesan staff after they have collectively experienced a parish parent presentation. Leaders are encouraged to adapt it to local needs:

Diocesan Meeting Template

- 1) **For:** Diocesan leaders from various offices, agencies, and departments.
- 2) **Outcomes:** At the conclusion of the meeting, diocesan staff members will have ...
 - a) ...Discussed their own thoughts, feelings, reactions and responses to the presentation(s) (assuming they have seen the parent presentation; if not, the parent presentation ought to be experienced by all participants prior to the meeting)
 - b) ...Identified emerging priorities based on the information presented
 - c) ...Discussed and identified next steps
- 3) **Agenda** (with the many and varied diocesan leadership structures here in the U.S., this agenda will necessarily need to be adapted for local circumstances).
 - a. Round Robin Discussion: each diocesan leader has several minutes to provide initial responses to the information, guided by the following:
 - i. What surprised you?
 - ii. What struck you as most significant for the diocese? For your ministry/service area?
 - iii. What did this information suggest to you that our diocese should be either strengthening or doing differently?
 - b. **Common Threads and Emerging Themes:** diocesan leaders take a few moments of quiet prayer to reflect on what they've heard, focusing on emerging common themes. Following the reflection, and by way of discerning possible emerging diocesan priorities, they brainstorm responses to these two sentence stems (rules of brainstorming apply, with no criticism of ideas and minimal discussion of ideas, so as to generate a list of material that will be prioritized in a subsequent step):
 - i. All of this says to me that...
 - ii. We need (or need to)...
 - c. **Prioritization:** After the brainstorming, the diocesan leaders discuss the various ideas that had been generated so as to seek consensus on what seem to be the emerging priority needs. Note that consensus is not the same thing as compromising, or finding the least common denominator that all can agree on. Rather it is the hard work of listening, seeking understanding and moving towards ideas that gather the most general enthusiasm because of the potential for high positive impact. This step can be accomplished with a form of numerical prioritization (e.g., a scale of zero to five, with five being the highest ranked). However, this approach without conversation can bypass important insights and lead to a less satisfactory result.

- d. **Next Steps:** These of course will vary greatly according to parishes, resources, demographics, size of parish staff, etc. **Following are four possible next step scenarios.** They are neither mutually exclusive nor are they necessarily sequential. Parent gatherings, for instance, may well lead to more substantial pastoral planning. Conversely, either a targeted or general pastoral planning effort can make good use of more SCF presentations and parent gatherings across the diocese to generate interest, engagement and leadership by parents themselves.
4. **Multiple Parish Leader Presentations:** If the diocesan leaders discern that broad-based consciousness-raising ought to happen so as to increase the sense of urgency across the diocese, they may choose to orchestrate more SCF Parish Leader presentations for the priests and parish leaders of the dioceses using the material on the discreet website, including the wide use of the SCF parish promotional flyer (D-1) with parish leadership.
5. **Follow-Up Parent Gathering(s):** Perhaps in conjunction with SCF parent presentations, diocesan leaders may decide to collaborate with the SCF parishes to plan and implement a variety of follow-up opportunities for parents.
6. **Targeted Pastoral/Formational Responses:** If the information presented in SCF calls for targeted pastoral or formational responses, the diocesan leadership may convene special task forces or working groups to pursue one or several of these or consider offering workshops or in-services at regularly scheduled diocesan gatherings on:
- a. Parent Engagement by the Parish
 - b. Family-Centered, Parent-Empowered Sacramental Ministry*
 - c. Resourcing and Building up the Domestic Church
 - d. Family-Based, Parent-Led Faith Formation
 - e. Whole Community Catechesis
 - f. Family Impact Analysis
 - g. Family Advocacy
 - h. Diocesan Symposium on “Putting, Families, Parents & Children at the Center” or (“Growing the Marriage-Building Parish”)
 - i. Athletics in Support of the Domestic Church
 - j. Comprehensive Youth Ministry, youth ministry leadership
 - k. Resource Development (ongoing, current, web-based and other “best” resources made instantly or immediately available to parishes and families)
- * **Note:** the term “Sacramental preparation” has been intentionally avoided here since it implicitly conveys an endpoint to participation in the Sacraments, and potentially leads to a “consumer-provider” approach to the Sacraments. By contrast, “Sacramental Ministry” connotes explicit, intentional ministry before (catechumenal ministry), and after (mystagogical ministry), leading to ongoing support and encouragement in living out the Sacraments.
7. **Diocesan Pastoral Planning:** If diocesan leadership discerns that the information presented in SCF calls for a unified diocesan-wide pastoral response, use the following outline of a Diocesan Pastoral Planning Process.

Diocesan Pastoral Planning Process: inter-departmental, inter-agency, inter-office and intra-office collaborative broad-based pastoral planning.

Planning Process

- a. SCF parent presentation(s) (if necessary, do separate parent presentations for diocesan and parish staffs)
 - i. SCF leader session(s)
 - ii. SCF presenters trained
- b. Identify leadership for collaborative diocesan pastoral planning:
 - i. steering committee with convener
 - ii. interdisciplinary task force (diocesan and parish leaders) commissioned to develop a pastoral plan
- c. In-service education for task force and other stakeholders with access to the most current thinking and resources
- d. Assessment of diocesan strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT; note that other assessment processes such as surveys, focus groups, etc. may be used as well)
- e. Review potential strategic priorities/approaches (see below)
- f. Develop pastoral plan
 - i. Vision and mission
 - ii. Diocesan priorities
 - iii. Goals, objectives, programs, projects
 - iv. Implementation process developed (how will the plan be implemented, by whom, and according to what timeline?)
 - v. Communication / PR strategy developed
 - vi. Budget and resources aligned with the plan (personnel, materials, facilities, etc.)
 - vii. Evaluation
- g. Implementation
 - i. Steering Committee oversees and orchestrates pastoral plan.
 - ii. Project and program teams are organized and commissioned to implement pastoral plan.
 - iii. Resources assessed, gathered, developed and made accessible
 - iv. Communication / PR strategy implemented
 - v. Ongoing evaluation, fine-tuning, further planning, implementation, evaluation, etc.



Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth **Parent to Parish Response Form**



Completing this form does not obligate you to anything nor add you to any mailing list

Full Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP Code _____

Parish _____ E-Mail _____

Day Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Check those that apply:

- I am interested in meeting with other parents for sharing ideas and support. Please contact me as groups begin to form.

My meeting preferences are as follows (checking these do not commit you to those choices).

- Frequency Preference (check all that apply)
 - Daily
 - Weekly
 - Bi-Weekly
 - Monthly
 - Bi-Monthly
- Time Preference (check all that apply)
 - Morning
 - Afternoon
 - Evening
- Day Preference (check all that apply)
 - Sun.
 - Mon.
 - Tues.
 - Wed.
 - Thurs.
 - Fri.
 - Sat.

- I am interested in helping our parish plan some follow-up steps to creating Strong Catholic Families and Youth.

- I am interested in receiving resources (print/electronic/e-mail) to help me parent my children in faith.

- I am interested in becoming more involved in a parish ministry:

- for myself
- with my family

Specific Ministry for Self: _____

Specific Ministry for Family: _____

- Please contact me to help my children/teens become more involved in faith and church.

- Additional comments or ideas you wish to communicate to the leadership of the parish:

OVER

Take a few moments to help us to better support and partner with you...

Our Catholic Church and faith are here to support you with your children, your family, and in our parish community. This means that whatever you are dealing with matters to the church. We are here to celebrate what is working and to walk with you as you face life's expected and unexpected challenges.

Please let us know how we can be more supportive of you and your family by checking the area(s) below. We will respond to you directly and confidentially. May God bless you and your family and know that our love, prayers, and support are with you!

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family prayer resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Doing service for others with my children |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dealing with technology in our home | <input type="checkbox"/> Talking about faith and morals at home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol, drugs and addiction issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Dating and adolescent sexuality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Making moral decisions in our family | <input type="checkbox"/> Dealing with loss and grief |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building family traditions | <input type="checkbox"/> Support for my marriage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Need for family counseling resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Seeking parent support group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stress and time management | <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic violence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding the other generation | <input type="checkbox"/> Health needs for family or extended family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Websites, books, & family resources | <input type="checkbox"/> Support for single parents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Support for blended families | <input type="checkbox"/> Support for incarcerated family members |

Other: _____

Name (Person to Contact): _____

What is the best way to reach you during the day:

Phone _____ **or E-Mail** _____

Other: _____



“The joys and the hopes, the grief’s and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the grief’s and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts.”

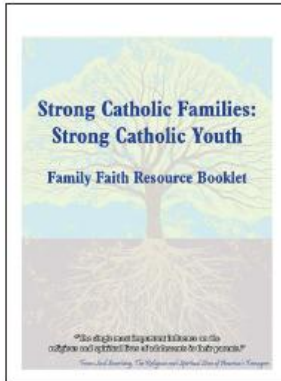
Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Vatican, Dec. 7, 1965



Materials to Support Trainings

Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth

Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth Booklet



Parents are charged with the responsibility of passing on the gift of faith to their children.

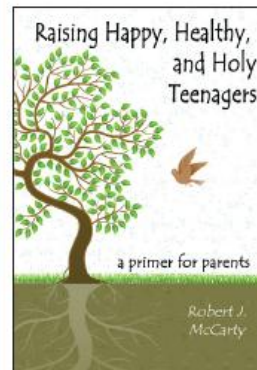
This short booklet is full of great information and helpful tips for families to grow in faith together.

\$5.50 (1-39 copies)

\$5.00 (40-79 copies)

additional discounts available to \$3.00 per book

Raising Happy, Healthy, and Holy Teenagers



Parents of teenagers will find this short volume full of tips and recommendations on how to guide and support their son or daughter through the adolescent years. Principles discussed—affirmation, respect, effective communication, and modeling faith.

\$9.95 (1-49 copies)

\$8.45 (50-99 copies)

additional discounts available to \$7.95 per book

Strong Catholic Families: Strong Catholic Youth Prayer/Blessing Card (English or Spanish)



Colorful table tent cards are a great way to encourage prayer in the home. One side offers two different meal prayers. The other features two blessing prayers, a general blessing of family and a special occasion blessing.

Available in English and Spanish.

\$2.00 per card (1-24)

\$1.80 per card (25-49)

additional discounts available to \$1.20 per card

Find additional resources on our website.

www.nfcym.org/family

Purchase these items from our Online Store.

www.NFCYM.org, Click Online Store

Plan ahead for your training. All orders are fulfilled within 10 business days.



Serving Those Who Serve the Young Catholic Church
www.nfcym.org, info@nfcym.org, 202-636-3825