**Flexible Faith Formation Electives**

Adoration: When we think about the people we love, oftentimes it is in the quiet moments where we are just looking at them that we realize the depth of love present. Adoration is the Church’s way of helping us experience that with God. The Eucharist is placed on the altar and we are invited to simply be with Jesus and look at Him and let Him look at us. At first that can sound very boring, so of course there are materials to help us pray and guide the conversation. Ultimately, God just wants to be with us, and Adoration is a great way to experience that. Adoration is offered at various times in the Cluster that will be published in the bulletin and on the website. Consider coming for 20 minutes each month as a family and just being with the Lord.

Reconciliation: Going to confession can feel a bit like going to the dentist or to the doctor for a check-up, which means it’s really easy for all of us to put it off. However, this flows from a misunderstanding of the Sacrament as a place of punishment or judgment. In fact, it is a place of judgment- but the judgment is *always* on the side of mercy when we come and experience God’s mercy there. The Church desires us to experience this at least once a year, or as often as we need it when there is serious sin present. Christ our Hope offers regular times for Reconciliation and will be providing easy guides for the Sacrament at the back of the church buildings. Take the risk, take some time and use the guide to examine your conscience and commit to going to Reconciliation as a family, perhaps as a monthly practice- not as punishment but as a new way, a necessary way, to experience the mercy of God concretely.

Sacred Silence: Today’s world is full of distractions. Your challenge as a family is to take an hour a week to turn off the screens (phones, computers, televisions, etc). Silence refers to silence from electronics. Take this hour to talk with each other, pray together or separately, play board games, explore the outdoors,  or each person can take this time to read or do another activity quietly on their own, but with everyone physically together and technology turned off. Adapt the challenge based on need- maybe even set a time in the evening where electronics are set aside until the morning. Create a space for the silence that can be filled with love of God and other people.

Read religious stories to children: For parents with younger kids, read stories from a children’s Bible to them or with them each night for two weeks. Your children may come to ask for these stories because they already sound familiar to them. As your children get older you can move from the children’s Bible to ones designed for older students and then eventually your children may ask to read it themselves.

Praying together at home: Prayer is powerful. It can be formal, or more personal such as Lectio Divina or using a daily prayer and reflection book as a family. As a family you could make a commitment to daily prayer for three weeks (use a prayer app, book, or pray a decade of the rosary).

Help children learn rote prayers. The Archdiocese of Dubuque list certain prayers that students should know at each grade level. Make a commitment to pick one prayer or belief at a time and work on it each day until learned. Many of these can be broken into small chunks that you could work on in the car, or at the dinner table. For example, do not try to learn the 10 Commandments at one time. Learn one at a time, building each time on what you learned before. The faith formation office has multiple resources available for you that includes these prayers.

Sacred space/ Prayer corner: Create a sacred space in your home. In the past it was common for Catholic families to have a spot in their home with a Bible, crucifix, or statute of Mary or a saint. This was the spot where families went to talk to God, pray petitions, or pray the rosary together. Find a quiet place in your home to create a sacred space for family members to have a conversation with God.

Family movie night: The FFC will be offering family movies and discussion nights throughout the year. Watch the website and bulletin for dates and movies. We are open to suggestions for movies.

Family pilgrimage: Though I am sure we would all like to join Fr. Kyle on the pilgrimage to Italy, for many, especially those with school age kids, this is likely not possible this year. However, there are many great destinations within an easy drive that your family can head to for a pilgrimage. Possible destinations include: Cathedral of St. Raphael in Dubuque; Basilica of St. Francis Xavier in Dyersville; Our Lady of Guadeloupe Shrine in LaCross, WI; Queen of the Holy Rosary Mediatrix Between God and Man Shrine, Necedah, WI; The Shrine of the Grotto of the Redemption, West Bend, IA. These are a few, though there are many more through the United States. Any of these would be a great opportunity to learn more about our Catholic faith and take time to pray.

Service opportunities: We are all called to be Christ’s hands and feet in the world. Giving of ourselves to help others is a deep and profound experience. There are many local opportunities and we will have more listed on the website.

Have fun with faith and activities at home: There are many websites, blogs and apps with inspirational stories, video’s, songs, crafts, and other activities for families to do at home to grow their faith. Check out The Christ Our Hope website for a list and links. Pick one blog to follow, or commit to checking out one of these one a month. For example, one great resource is the archdiocese of Dubuque pintrest page. You do not need to have a pintrest account to access this. Go to: Pintrest.com/DBQArch

Adult “Journey with Christ” sessions: This year our hope is to focus more on helping parents and care takers reflect on their faith journey, provide practical suggestions on how to pass your faith onto children and share your faith story. We also hope to provide opportunities for parents to visit with each other about their struggles and successes in helping their children know Jesus and the Catholic faith.

Totus Tuus: Totus Tuus is a fun, exciting, and faith focused week of activities and learning for those entering first grade to recent graduates. Totus Tuus refers to a total dedication to Mary and the example Mary gave to all of us. Each day students learn in depth about a mystery of the rosary, pray the rosary, and attend daily Mass. This is a whole family experience because parents can be involved by talking with their children about what they learned and experienced each day. Emails will be sent home each night to let parents know what was discussed in class that day and give parents discussion starters to help you talk with your youth about their day. Parents can also help as classroom volunteers.

HerStory in Christ: HerStory in Christ is a small faith sharing group for high school females. This group meets one or two times a month for fellowship and discussion. This has been a powerful way for high school girls to grow in their faith together and have ongoing encounters with Jesus. As parents this offers opportunities for you to visit with your children and grow with them.

Mass: Attend Mass regularly as a family. The Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith. It nourishes us Spiritually and Father Aaron’s homilies connect the readings to our everyday life. Look in the bulletin for a new feature coming soon that will include discussion starters for you to visit with your children about the Mass readings.

**This is far from an all-inclusive list. The key is to make a conscience effort to live out your faith with your children as a family to strengthen their and your personal relationship with Jesus.**