



Our Lady of Lourdes

Proposal for Faith & Fellowship Sundays

FINAL DRAFT - August 9, 2021

OVERVIEW

To strengthen our efforts in making intentional disciples of Jesus Christ at every age and stage of life in our parish and within each individual family, we are proposing a new faith formation initiative for the whole parish called "Faith & Fellowship Sundays". These Faith & Fellowship Sundays will be an opportunity for our entire parish family to gather together to encounter Jesus and grow in faith in a way that builds community, engages people of all ages and is mindful of the ever-increasing burdens on the time and attention of families.

CURRENT LANDSCAPE & CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

"As the family goes, so goes the nation, and so goes the whole world in which we live."

[Saint Pope John Paul II, from a Homily delivered on November 30, 1986 in Perth, Australia](#)

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, many families, and our society as a whole, were forced to clear our usually busy calendars of events and activities. One of the blessings in disguise in an otherwise difficult situation was the way in which this "shut down" opened up new opportunities to rediscover the value and beauty of family time and remind us of our deep need for community. As we look to the future, we want to be careful not to lose sight of this shift in perspective and go back to business as usual. We are also mindful of the truth that practicing our faith is a core part of family life and not simply another extracurricular activity. It is within the family, the domestic church, where faith is most effectively practiced, taught, and lived out together.

Spending time together as a family is not only sacred, but practically helpful. A [study](#) by Columbia University in 2010 showed that teens who had 5-7 family dinners per week were twice as likely to receive higher grades, and three times more likely to say they have excellent relationships with their parents. They're also much less likely to get involved in risky or immoral activities. Mealtime is also a great time to share about faith, but family meals and faith-based conversations within the family are happening less and less. A [study](#) from Pew Research in 2016 showed that 53% of Americans discussed religion in their immediate family only a few times a year or less. It's clear there's a benefit to families being together in fellowship and faith but the biggest difficulty is figuring out how to practically make it happen when weeks are so busy and we're pulled in so many different directions.

THE PROPOSAL

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church exists to make disciples. The goal of Faith & Fellowship Sundays is to partner with the domestic churches of the parish and school to promote discipleship growth for each and every member of the parish family. Proposed below are some key elements of this new initiative:

1. Faith & Fellowship Sundays will be held between the 8:00am & 10:30am Sunday morning Masses (roughly 9:00-10:15am) and will incorporate three main elements of fellowship, learning, and witness.
2. All members of the Lourdes Church and School community are invited and encouraged to attend.
3. Religious Education for school children in grades K-8 will now be incorporated into Faith & Fellowship Sundays instead of being offered on Wednesday evenings.
4. Some weeks students will meet separately to receive their own developmentally appropriate faith lesson, while there are opportunities for adults to be formed in faith.
5. During other weeks fellowship or formation experiences may be intergenerational which would allow community members of all ages to grow in faith together.
6. Confirmation classes for high school students (which have already been meeting in this timeframe on Sundays) will continue to utilize the same format, with an increased effort to engage parents of the students in the adult faith formation opportunities.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Reclaim Sundays as a day for families to grow in faith beyond Mass

As part of our faith, we are all called to "keep holy the Sabbath". While attending and worshiping with the parish community at Mass is one of the main ways in which we can do this, it most certainly is not exhaustive. At every Mass we are sent forth to love and serve God and proclaim the Gospel. But what this calling means and how exactly to live it out takes some unpacking and deeper exploration and learning. If we are not forming our faith outside of Mass, we are missing ingredients in the recipe of being an effective and intentional disciple of Jesus; which we are all called to be through Baptism.

One stop experience to strengthen the faith of the whole family

One of the biggest challenges people face in finding opportunities to grow in faith is time. With work, sports, homework, extracurricular activities, and everyone often running on a different schedule it can be difficult to get everyone together at the same time for the same purpose. Instead of crowding another meeting into the family schedule during the week, we're simply adding an experience to the week which already falls in rhythm with many

families' habits to attend Mass on Sunday mornings. Moreover, it's not just for some family members, but the whole family can benefit from what's offered at the same exact time.

Children may be more likely to receive and retain new information

Sunday mornings may offer a better opportunity for youth to be fresh and retain information. On weekday evenings, after a full day of school (not to mention after any other extracurricular activities or homework), children can often be physically or mentally exhausted and overwhelmed which makes it difficult to learn new information. Sunday mornings may provide a better opportunity for youth to engage with and retain information.

Enhance the sense of community between parish and school families

At Lourdes, we are blessed to have a vibrant parish community which extends to our Catholic school. Both the parish and school strive to make the living Christ visible in Bettendorf so these communities really should be reinforcing each other. In practical application, however, there is still room for improvement in fostering a better sense of community and relationships between families enrolled in Lourdes Catholic School and other parish families who have kids enrolled in public schools. Faith & Fellowship Sundays can be an opportunity for increased community and fellowship between these two groups.

Opens more opportunities for family life and engagement throughout the week

Faith & Fellowship Sundays will present a "one-stop-shop" for family faith formation. This conceivably should free up more time throughout the week for families to connect together or grow in other ways. It may make it more possible for parents to be in a small group experience. It may make it easier for kids to get more involved in youth ministry opportunities. It may simply be an opportunity to have another meal together as a family, or start some other family tradition or activity. Either way, it hopefully will create a more dynamic but less stress-filled week.

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

In conclusion, we are excited about the possibility of this new family faith formation initiative and are currently in the process of reaching out to those who may be impacted for insights and feedback. If you have any questions or concerns or would like to share your thoughts, please complete our parish-wide survey available on our website or through contacting the parish offices, or feel free to reach out to any one of the staff members listed below.

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