



The following suggestions are intended to *prime the pump* of your creativity! Adapt the following “prime-pumpers” to your setting and design activities of your own.

If you are willing to share your idea(s) so that they may be included in future publications contact: DrPatMcCormack@aol.com.

Dr. Patricia M. McCormack, IHM
www.ParentTeacherSupport.org

Prime-Pumpers for Back-Door Evangelization

1. **Game Night:** Set aside one class session each semester for parents to accompany their children and engage in fun by playing games. Techno-savvy folks can really add spice to the night! Network with other teachers so that each teacher prepares only one topic and the families move from classroom to classroom or table to table. Simple activities include bingo, tic-tac-toe, concentration, relay games, fill-in-the-blanks, word matching-tests, etc., all involving vocabulary and definitions. For example:

- Catechetical program materials for religious formation classes as well as publisher Internet sites include worksheets of “Catholic Trivia” and/or end-of unit summary fact sheets.
- Focus on Catholic Culture. Use topics like Commandments, Sacraments, Saints, Rituals/Practices (like Stations of the Cross, the Rosary, formula for Confession), details of Catholic disciplines (like Holy Days of Obligation, fast, abstinence) and common prayers.
- Focus on characters from the Hebrew Scriptures, Christian Scriptures, and Church History.
- Familiarize families with the format of the Bible. Search citations to complete a quotation; match a vocabulary word/personal name with a description; or assign a Gospel story to each family. Appoint a time for the family to act out the story for others in the room. Instruct the family to suggest a “life lesson” that all members might apply in the week that follows.
- Deliver messages that touch the heart. For instance, use an inspirational e-mail “forward” for parent-child discussion, a child-oriented movie or cartoon with questions that touch the heart, or simple stories like those found in *Chicken Soup for the Soul* . . .
- Design a Computer Lab Passport Project. A passport collects stamps that validate international travels. Create a passport-style book or a handout sheet that indicates various website activities or YouTube clips for parent and child to view and discuss. Integrate the free material that Catholic publishers post like RCL, Liguori, and Sadlier make available.
- Design a Mary Marathon event. Orchestrate breakout sessions/activities to focus on Mary, for example: audio-visual presentations of various apparitions (like Fatima, Lourdes, Guadalupe, Miraculous Medal/St. Catherine Labore); the rosary (the meaning of its prayers and how to make a rosary); titles in the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary; (Marian art and symbolism; creating a family character rosary; multicultural representations of Mary; major Marian feast days, etc.

2. Orchestrate “**MAKE AND TAKE**” sessions for (1) pre-Advent, (2) pre-Lent, and (3) Ordinary Time. Demonstrate ways to “honor” the season in the home. Background information is available at www.ParentTeacherSupport.org . . . *Newsletters/Family Faith/Creating a Spiritual Culture*. Engage program parents to bring to the session a different symbol/idea along with printed instructions and materials. Schedule time for the family to create a “take home memento.” Resources include: (1) Catholic Inspired.com, (2) The Catholic Toolbox: Liturgical Year Activities (<http://catholicblogger1.blogspot.com/2014/11/liturgical-year-activities.html>), (3) 1000+ Ideas about Catholic Crafts (www.pinterest.com)
3. Schedule a “**TEACHING MASS**” during which an adult uses a script that *unobtrusively* explains the various parts of the liturgy while Mass is in process. Engage children to serve as choir, altar servers, procession participants, readers, etc., and arrange for the parents to sit with their child.
4. Guide group-experiences of **PRAYING WITH THE GOSPEL-SCRIPTURES**. For instance, explore Gospel ABCs. (www.ParentTeacherSupport.org. . . Newsletters/Religious Ed/Gospel ABCs).
5. Schedule **THEATER EVENTS** that involve the child as a performer. For example a play or musical in which heart-messages are obvious as in the programs produced by Creative Ministry Solutions like *Follow the Star, We Three Spies, The Case of the Reluctant Innkeeper, Angels Aware*.
6. **ROLE PLAY** a desired parent behavior. Take nothing for granted! Prepare parent-child teams to demonstrate vignettes of topics like: integrating Jesus into conversation, teaching prayer, shaping character, how to correct in love, how to study a religion homework assignment, etc.
7. Host a family-centered **MINI-RETREAT**. Structure three or four activities that rotate every half hour. Combine previous suggestions with videos, CDs, DVDs, or episodes of TV shows, cartoons... all where the media message is clear, simple, unmistakable.
8. **CELEBRATE DIVERSITY!** Organize a way to share *family customs* or *cultural rituals* related to birthdays, anniversaries, religious observance of Christmas, Advent, Lent, and Marian Devotions.
9. Schedule a **FAMILY EUCHARISTIC-TEACHING EVENING** near Thanksgiving time. Include brief experiences of exposition, adoration, benediction, and suggested practices for active participation in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Then encourage families to take a “family watch time” before the Repository of the Blessed Sacrament on Holy Thursday evening and during the parish celebration of Forty Hours. (A suggested program with accompanying scripts and handouts is available at www.ParentTeacherSupport.org . . . Newsletters/Family Faith/Family Eucharistic Experience.)
10. Initiate life-long support and faith-communities at the time of Baptism. **NETWORK FAMILIES** who celebrate a Baptism within the year. Provide a formative experience to this group of parents once a year. Host an annual anniversary reunion of Baptismal families. Offer age-related support in child-rearing. Network families to organize off-campus discussions in private homes, cafes, or “wherever.”
11. Provide easy-on-the-nerves parent formation-education **VENUES** that coincide with the child faith formation sessions.

• **Small Group Discussion:** Invite parking lot parents into a classroom to discuss a newsletter and deliver the literature to the cars of parents who decline the invitation. Provide **succinct literature** on parenting-support themes. Allow time for reading. Then, in round-robin fashion ask/answer questions like: (1) How did the newsletter affirm or validate you? (2) How did the newsletter challenge

you? (3) Name one action, practice, or behavior that you will apply between now and the next session. Free articles are available at www.ParentTeacherSupport.org, www.empoweringparents.com, and many other Internet sites as well as in printed material. Prepare parents to serve as discussion facilitators.

- **Reading Room:** Stock it with parenting literature like *Catholic Update* (Liguori), *Gospel Weekly* (Pflaum), *Together* (Loyola), etc. Provide coffee, tea, and water.

- **Viewing Room:** Appoint a space to accommodate DVD or video viewing of presentations like the *Catholicism Series* (Msgr. Robert Baron) or *Passion and Purpose*, also *Seven Pillars of Catholic Spirituality* (Matthew Kelly) or *What Makes Us Catholic?* (Thomas Groome), or *Bible Study* as well as other faith formation programs for adults and teens (Ascension Press).

- **Wifi Space:** Publish a list of web-based adult presentations on topics like sacraments, the Mass, the Bible, Christian morality or Catholic traditions. Include *Busted Halo* web-video series like, *Sacraments 101* (Fr. Dave Dwyer, CSP) and *Sacraments 201* (Fr. Steven Bell, CSP), *You Don't Know Jack ... about Lent, Advent, Halloween, Valentine's Day, New Years* and similar traditions (Fr. Jack Collins, CSP), or church videos and YouTube videos like *Chiseled*, and *Grace*, and *Triduum* (Skit Guys @www.skitguys.com).

12. Prior to the opening of the annual Faith Formation Program schedule an “expect to see you there” registration session. **VIDEO TAPE OR DIGITIZE A MEETING.** it so that you can offer it on a morning, an afternoon, an evening, before/after the Saturday Vigil Mass, and after Sunday Masses. Post it on the parish website for at-home viewing. Explain curriculum expectations. Demonstrate a process for home-study. Include in the agenda a mini-presentation on what Catholic Parenting looks like. (Refer to www.ParentTeacherSupport.org /Newsletter/Family Faith/ A Guide to Catholic Parenting).

13. Organize parents into **ASSISTANCE GROUPS** for Faith Formation class sessions. Ask for volunteers in a general setting and/or newsletter, but also make personal contact. Typical tasks include setting up a phone chain or group e-mail, writing a class newsletter, serving as a class-starter aide for the first 15 minutes of class (to attend to students, listen to their assignment work, or coach them on prayers and formulas), and assist in arts 'n crafts projects.

14. **TRAIN MISSIONARY-FACILITATORS.** Train a few parents to “break open the Word” or other methods of praying with the Gospel. Commission them to go out to individual homes to conduct a session with the family so that parents will be more likely to continue the practice on their own. The facilitators might also invite a group of parents into their home for a faith-sharing session. Who knows? Small faith communities might evolve.

15. **NIGHT PRAYER HOMEWORK.** Monthly send home a night prayer for parents to pray aloud with their children at bedtime. For instance, Psalm 8, Psalm 23, Psalm 139, or a prayer that reads like God is speaking to the child through the parent's voice, or the words of a hymn like David Haas' song, “You Are Mine,” or Sarah Bauer, “My Own Backyard.” The child will absorb God's love and security and the routine will likely surface favorite phrases or thoughts within the parent that quite possibly will jump-start the parent heart.

16. Serve as a clearinghouse for **WEB-BASED PARENT RESOURCES.** Publish links that support faith formation and parenting practices in general. Jed de Torres is the Instructional Specialist for Blended Learning for the Diocese of San Jose, CA. Following is a “short list” of web-based resources that Jed has found helpful in ministry with/for parents. (Contact: vdetorres@dsj.org)

Family Formation
<http://familyformation.net/>

Strong Catholic Family Faith (Parent Faith Formation)
<http://www.catholicfamilyfaith.org>

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops . . . choose “Family Resources”

- <http://www.usccb.org>
- <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/year-of-faith/year-of-faith-family-resources.cfm>
- [podcasts](#)

Center for Youth Ministry Training . . . *includes faith formation resources for parents*
<http://www.cymt.org/involving-parents-in-faith-formation-part-1/>

Catholic Mom: <http://catholicmom.com>

Faith Inkubators: www.faithink.com

Family Matters (Susan Vogt): <http://susanvogt.net>

Home Word: www.homeword.com. Choose "Families"

Legacy Milestones (Brian Haynes): www.legacymilestones.com

MOPS - Mothers of Preschoolers: www.mops.org

Parent Further (Search Institute): www.parentfurther.com

Tumblon Website (helps parents understand and nurture their children's growth): <http://tumblon.com>

Movie Reviews & More: www.christiananswers.net

Crafts for Kids: www.dltk-kids.com

Focus on the Family: www.focusonthefamily.com

Family Time: www.familytime.com

Books for Family Themes: www.heritagebuilders.com

Articles related to Children's Health and Development: www.kidshealth.com

For Ministerial Leaders, Catechists, Teachers

- Vibrant Faith Ministries: www.vibrantfaith.org
- Fashioning Faith (Center for Ministry Development): www.cmdnet.org
- Zero to Three (health and development of infants and toddlers): www.zerotothree.org
- Search Institute: www.search-institute.org
- The Religion Teacher: <http://www.thereligionteacher.com/catholic-faith-formation-and-teens/>
- www.earlychildhood.com