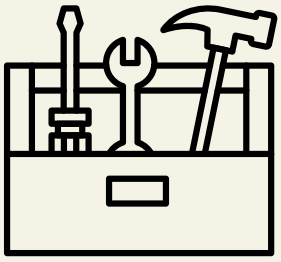
ST. PATRICK
Catholic Church

Faith Formation Family Tool Box

November 20th through December 2nd
Following Jesus

www.st-patricks.org

About the Tool Box



St Patrick's Faith Formation provides these resources to support your family, and to make living your Catholic faith together as a family simple and effective.

We know that fitting everything into an already busy schedule is complicated. So, we aren't asking you to do it all. Instead we invite your family to take on these resources as a challenge. Ask yourselves "What can we do?"

We have intentionally planned and crafted a variety of options to choose from with all families in mind. Look through the options provided and pick a few that work well for your family. Choose an afternoon to do several activities, or sprinkle them throughout your week.

This is your toolbox! Use the tools that are most helpful in building your family's faith together.

What You'll Find in This Tool Box

- **Practical Faith Tools** — Simple prayer practice, Bible readings, saint stories, conversation starters, fun videos, and Sunday Mass support
- **Lived Faith Ideas** — Crafts, recipes, games, pop culture, service projects, faith and science, and more
- **Deeper Learning** — Optional resources for parents wanting to learn more about that session's topic.

A Faith-Filled Afternoon/Evening

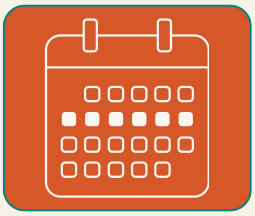
Some families might find it easiest to choose three or four ideas in this packet and make them into an afternoon or evening of faith-focused fun.

- Start your time in prayer or conversation by using one or two of the options in the "Practical Faith Tools." For example:
  - Begin with one of the suggested Prayer Habits
  - Use the suggested Conversation starters
  - Watch one of the recommended video resources.
- Then spend some time together working on one or two of the "Lived Faith Ideas"
  - Choose a craft or recipe to do together
  - Play a game or watch a pop-culture option
  - Complete a faith and science or service project
- Conclude using one of the prayer ideas provided.
  - Read the Gospel for the upcoming Sunday together
  - Learn about this session's Saint and ask for their prayers.

An Intentional Lord's Day

Perhaps it will work well for your family to integrate these resources into the rest of your Sunday before and after Mass.

- Read the Mass Readings as a family before Mass, or have a passenger read them on the drive to Church.
- Utilize the Conversation starters on the drive home from Mass, and practice a recommended prayer habit or Lord's Day idea.
- Integrate a recipe idea into lunch or dinner.
- Utilize a game, pop-culture, faith and science, or service project idea as part of your family time in the afternoon.
- Utilize the saint or art resources to conclude your day as a family in prayer.



Sprinkled Throughout the Week

For some, it might just be most practical to identify your favorite ideas from these materials and plug them in to different opportunities throughout the week, whenever time allows.

- Choose a day to add a recipe idea to dinner.
- Use conversation ideas when driving together in the car.
- Start your weekend with a service or faith and science project
- Read the Mass readings together Saturday evening in preparation for Mass the next day.
- The options are limitless!

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Find easy to use links to all resources on the St Patrick's Family Formation webpage

Practical Faith Tools

Student Workbooks

Your Child's work that they use during Wednesday Sessions with their catechist provides quality resources on the session's topic. We encourage parents to utilize these as a way to debrief the Wednesday session as well as carry the Wednesday session into the rest of the week. Below we have outlined the most helpful parts of each chapter as well as the specific chapter your child worked on with their catechist during our most recent Wednesday session.

- The last page in every chapter is an at home "with my family" page with scripture, activity, and discussion options.
- Each chapter introduces the example of a saint that demonstrates the topic through their lived faith.
- Throughout each chapter, there are a variety of simple Prayer options that you can integrate into other prayer times throughout your week.

November 19th, 2025 – Following Jesus	
K: Unit 2, Session 6	1: Unit 2, Session 6
3: Unit 2, Session 7	4: Unit 2, Session 6
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Conversation Starters

One of the most consistent indicators of a child who will continue to live their faith into adulthood is growing up in a family that simply talks openly and actively about their faith. Consider using some of the provided conversation starters to discuss your faith as a family this week.

1. **The theme this session is following Jesus**. How can we better follow Jesus? What is something each person can start doing this week?

2. **Thanksgiving is arriving soon, but we should really be practicing gratitude daily**. What are you thankful for today? Everyone at the dinner table can answer this each night the family is able to be together.

3. **"In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials."** [1 Peter 1:6] Consider as a family how we can be thankful, even when things do not seem to be going well.

4. **Advent is almost here!** What can we do to prayerfully anticipate the birth of Jesus? How do our Advent traditions help us prepare? Are there other Advent traditions we'd like to try this year? (Fun connection: this year, Advent begins on St. Andrew's feast day, one of the Apostles whom Jesus invited to "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." [Mt 4:19])

"Advent begins quietly, with the lighting of the first candle on the Advent wreath. As the days grow shorter in the northern hemisphere, we move to a place of increasing light both indoors and in our hearts. Instead of adding more things to do and more challenges to meet in an already busy time, Advent calls us to rest, to step back, to learn to appreciate the small events and simple gifts that flow through our days."
~ Diane M. Houdek, Simple Gifts

Memory Verse

The Word of God is important in our faith journey, and memorizing short, simple scripture verses can prove to be beneficial to us at all ages to allow God to more consistently speak to us throughout our daily life.

Mark 10:21 “Go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”

OR

Mark 8:34-5 “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.”

Mass Readings

Reading scripture together as a family before you hear the Word of God proclaimed at Mass is a great way to improve comprehension and impact among people young and old. Spend just a few minutes together reading the assigned readings for Mass from your Bible or by using the link provided. You can even do this together in the car, or as a time of prayer on Saturday evening before bed. You can also listen to the readings using the links provided. If needing to shorten this option, try just reading the Gospel.

Daily Readings
bible.USCCB.org

Sunday, November 23rd
Christ the King
First Reading: 2 Samuel 5:1-3
Psalm 122: 1-5
Second Reading: Colossians 1:12-20
Gospel: Luke 23:35-43
No matter how discouraging the world's leaders and events may seem, this day we declare to the world and remind ourselves that Jesus is the Lord of the Church and of the entire universe.

Sunday, November 30th
First Sunday of Advent
First Reading: Isaiah 2:1-5
Psalm 122: 1-9
Second Reading: Romans 13:11-14
Gospel: Matthew 24:37-44
Advent is a special liturgical season of preparation to be alert and ready for the second coming of Jesus. It includes an element of penance in the sense of preparing, quieting, and disciplining our hearts for the full joy of Christmas. The first Sunday of Advent traditionally focuses on hope.

Lord's Day Ideas

"Music creates harmony, thereby reaching everyone, consoling those who suffer, rekindling enthusiasm in the downhearted, and bringing forth wonderful values such as beauty and poetry, which reflect God's harmonious light." ~ Pope Francis

Music is a powerful way to praise, pray, and worship. As we begin Advent, we'll start to hear favorite and familiar hymns in Church as well as on the radio. Singing or humming these during this season can lift the hearts and souls. Below are some ways to incorporate music into your Sundays.

- Make and listen to a playlist of favorite hymns.
- Find and enjoy a playlist of Advent music.
- Try listening to some different music, such as Gregorian chant, Palestrina's polyphony works, or Mozart and Hadyn – both known for composing masses and sacred works of music.

Remember to continue making this a restful day with family. Some possibilities during the Advent season include:

- Slow down and work together: preparing dinner, making dessert, or even just setting the table.
- Put aside the technology during Sunday dinner to more easily show your love by fully listening to questions and participating in conversations.
- Gather favorite holiday picture books and read aloud one or more each Sunday evening for a short spell of togetherness and comfort.

Prayer Habits

Option 1:
Set up an Advent wreath. In addition to music, your Advent Sundays can be made a little more devotional with an Advent wreath. You can purchase these in the bookstore or even make your own with 4 or 5 candles (3 purple, 1 pink, and 1 optional white). Set up the Advent Wreath on or near the dinner table. Begin the first week by lighting just one purple candle during your meal-time prayer. Each Sunday, add another lit candle – the pink one is first lit on the third Sunday. On Christmas day, if using the optional white one, light all 5 candles.

Option 2:
Find an Advent devotional and begin to daily read or listen to it on the first day of Advent, November 30th. Many options are available for this seasonal prayer habit. A few possibilities are listed below.

- You can purchase booklets in the bookstore. Often the bookstore carries booklets that can be done with the whole family.
- Dynamic Catholic has online video reflections.
- You can sign up for emailed devotionals through Formed.
- Biola University incorporates music and art with their online Advent devotionals for Christians.

Hymn

Hymns are sung to lift the soul and draw our hearts closer to God. Many are based on Scripture, giving us another avenue to understanding and reflecting on the Sacred Word. Some hymns teach doctrine and express beliefs, reinforcing Catholic teachings and traditions.

Below is a hymn related to our session topic. Consider how your family might learn this hymn. Playing it while getting ready for the day? Listening while driving to work and school? Singing it as part of your meal or evening prayer routine?

Be Not Afraid

You shall cross the barren desert
But you shall not die of thirst
You shall wander far in safety
Though you do not know the way
You shall speak your words in foreign lands
And all will understand
You shall see the face of God and live

Be not afraid
I go before you always
Come follow me
And I will give you rest

If you pass through raging waters
in the sea you shall not drown
If you walk amid the burning flames
You shall not be harmed
If you stand before the power of Hell
and death is at your side
Know that I am with you through it all

Chorus

Blessed are your poor
For the kingdom shall be theirs
Blessed are you that weep and mourn
For one day you shall laugh
And if wicked tongues insult and hate you
All because of me
Blessed, blessed are you

Be Not Afraid
St. Laurence's Church Chorley

The Witness of the Saints

St. Ceclia by Guido Reni

This session's saint is St. Cecilia. Her story reminds us of the power of music to praise God, to bring beauty into the world, and to comfort those in need.

Feast day: November 22nd
Born and died in the 200's AD
Patron saint of musicians, singers, and poets.

For over a thousand years St. Cecilia has been one of the most venerated martyrs of the early Church; she is among the seven martyrs named in the Canon of the Mass.

According to a tradition, Cecilia was a Roman girl of patrician family, who had been brought up as a Christian. She fasted often and wore a coarse garment beneath her rich clothing.

Although she wished to remain a virgin, her father betrothed her to a young pagan named Valerian. Cecilia sang to the Lord in her heart throughout her wedding day. That night, Cecilia made known to her husband that she was a Christian and had taken a vow of virginity. Valerian followed his wife's directions and sought out a bishop named Urban, who was in hiding among the tombs of the martyrs, for this was a time of persecutions. Valerian made his profession of faith and the bishop baptized him.

When the young husband returned, he found an angel with flaming wings standing beside Cecilia. The angel placed chaplets of roses and lilies on their heads. The brother of Valerian, Tiburtius, was also converted; and after being baptized he too experienced many marvels.

The Witness of the Saints

Valerian and Tiburtius devoted themselves to good works on behalf of the Christian community, and they made it their special duty to give proper burial to those Christians who were put to death by order of the prefect Almachius.

The two brothers were themselves soon sentenced for refusing to sacrifice to Jupiter. Maximus, a Roman officer charged with their execution, was converted by a vision that came to him in the hour of their death. After professing Christianity, he too suffered martyrdom.

The three were buried by the grieving Cecilia, and a little later she herself was sentenced. The prefect came and tried to reason with her, but when he found her firm in her faith and scornful of his threats, he gave an order that she was to be suffocated by steam in her own bathroom.

Surviving this attempt on her life, a soldier was sent to behead her. He struck at her neck three times, then left her lying, still alive, for it was against the law to strike a fourth time. She lingered on for three days, during which the Christians who remained in Rome flocked to her house.

St. Cecilia's story teaches us

- to be courageous in faith - Cecilia risked her life by staying true to her vow to Christ. In our lives, this reminds us to hold firm to our commitments to God, even when pressured by the world to compromise.
- that we can influence others by example - Cecilia's witness led her husband and brother-in-law to conversion. Our own quiet faithfulness can inspire others, whether in family, friendships, or the workplace.
- to praise God in all circumstances - Cecilia sang to God even in suffering. We too can cultivate gratitude and worship in both joyful and difficult moments, finding strength in praising God no matter the situation.

"Arise, soldiers of Christ. Throw away the darkness and put on the armor of light."
~ St.Ceclilia

Praying with Art

Calling of St. Matthew
Caravaggio

Each session, your family will receive a print out of a work of sacred art related to that session's topic. Over the Church's history, it was known — long before anyone had heard of multiple intelligences — that some people learned better through visuals and images can also be helpful for prayer experiences.

For this reason, the Church has a tradition known as visio divina ("divine seeing" or prayer in which we invite God to speak to our hearts as we look at an image).

Experience visio divina or lead others by following these steps:

1. Choose a comfortable, quiet place where you will not be distracted. Quiet yourself and relax by focusing on your breathing.
2. Begin by paying attention to the details, including shapes, colors, lighting, and facial expressions/body language of characters in the image. Identify the parts of the image that stand out to you and share them with your family.
3. Take a moment to prayerfully consider how God is speaking to your heart and why you think God has drawn your attention to this specific part of the image. Pay attention to your feelings, and allow God to speak to you through the image.
4. Respond to God, expressing your thoughts, feelings, desires, or yearnings. This can be done silently or together as a family.
5. Conclude by taking a few moments of silence to rest and savor the beauty of the image.

Video Resources

For younger children:

Watch these video resources on Formed.org. All St Patrick's families have free access to Formed as part of being parishioners.

1. Following in His Footsteps | Brother Francis on Formed: Learn what it means to be a true follower of Jesus in action and deed as well as how our obedience can bring light to others.
2. The Days of Advent | Brother Francis on Formed: Brother Francis leads us on a daily journey in this special seasonal celebration of the coming of the Lord! Featuring meditations, prayers, and suggested activities to keep our focus on Christ this Christmas.

How Do I Use Formed?

- Go to formed.org/signup
- Select your parish by entering name, city and/or zip code
- Enter your name and email address
- Check that email account for a link to begin using FORMED.

For older youth:

1. Reflection on Advent: Libby offers some thoughts on how to make Advent more than the time you slog through to get to Christmas.

Find easy to use links to these video resources on the St Patrick's Family Formation webpage

www.st-patricks.org/formation/youth/family-formation

Lived Faith Ideas

Crafts

Advent Calendars

There are many options for making Advent calendars - paper chains, blank calendars, a Nativity scene, or even Lego calendars! Frugal Fun for Boys has a variety of possibilities, from a simple candy cane tower of 12 red and 12 white bricks that slowly gets built up day by day to a more advanced one (pictured below) with doors and sliding compartments that fit small items, such as Hershey Kisses.

Recipes

“Follow me, and I will make you fish for people,” Jesus told the fishermen Simon and Andrew. Make a snack of **gold fish crackers and pretzel nets** to represent Saint Andrew, whose feast day is November 30th.

Whether listening to music, singing, or making music to enhance our worship or Sunday leisure or to celebrate St. Cecilia, **here are some fun ideas for celebrating the gift of music.**

Musical Cake
Frost a cake baked in a round pan. Dot the top of the cake with chocolate morsels, points in, for the base of musical notes. Use chocolate frosting in a decorating tube to make the stems of notes.

Edible Piano
Make a partial piano out of Kit Kat bars! Place mini Kit Kats atop full white Kit Kat bars, spaced to resemble the black and white keys of the piano.

OR

Make tea sandwiches with white bread and place smaller rectangles of a darker bread (like rye or pumpernickel) atop the sandwiches, again spacing the tops to resemble the spacing of the black keys on a piano.

Faith and Science

This session we are focusing on following Jesus.

> *But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" [Mt 14:26-31]*

We are not likely to follow Jesus by walking on water, but we can easily flail about when trying to follow him in other ways. We lose sight of him as we look about us and panic. Here's a science exploration to remind us of the difference.

Mix together 1 part water and 2 parts corn starch. Stir slowly until it becomes a thick, gooey substance known as oobleck. Add food coloring, if desired. The mixture should feel solid when you tap it quickly but liquid when you touch it gently.

Place a hand in the mixture, allowing it to sink slowly. This is like the doubt Peter began to feel that caused him to start sinking in the sea. Pull your hand out. Now slap the oobleck. The surface should remain solid and firm, just as when we step out in faith like Peter.

Pop-Culture

During this season of thankfulness, or even as a game to play while waiting for the Thanksgiving feast, **go on a scavenger hunt of things you are thankful for.** Take photos of items you can't easily gather. Possible items to include on the list are a favorite place to relax, favorite things to do, good friends, things that make you laugh out loud, nature, things that make life easier, animal friends, or an item that brings comfort.

Enjoy a holiday classic. Discuss how it could help you better follow Jesus or how you might look to the Christmas season differently.

- **Read, watch, or listen to The Worst Best Christmas Pageant Ever** for an entertaining but fresh look at the Nativity of Jesus. Did you ever have some of the same thoughts as the Herdman children when listening to the Nativity Story? What do you think might change for the different characters after the pageant?

- **Watch the classic A Charlie Brown Christmas.** Have you ever felt like Charlie Brown? Have you ever been confident and knowledgeable like Linus reciting the Bible to answer Charlie Brown's desperate question?

Service Projects

Help your family!

- Prepare spaces for the Advent wreath and Nativity set. Remove any clutter and wipe down the surface. Arrange the items properly in the space.
- If you're having guests during the holidays, cheerfully help clean and decorate the rest of the house. Set the table and help with preparing food before guests arrive.
- Help your parents select a photo for your family's Christmas cards, put them into envelopes, or address and stamp the envelopes.

Give to those in need.

- Participate in one of the Giving Trees at St. Patrick's or another seasonal donation opportunity available in the area.
- Join the St. Patrick's caroling adventure (December 19th) or any other local ones available to you and bless others with the gift of music.

Deeper Learning

Parent Videos

Following Jesus

Following Jesus Comes First
Bishop Barron explains a Gospel reading that can be difficult to understand and accept but one that shows following Jesus is “more important than the highest of values.”

Let God Love You
Father Josh Johnson speaks from personal experience about not just loving Jesus but letting him love you in a way you have probably not imagined. He talks about how we are beloved, we are a delight, we are pleasing – regardless of what we have or haven’t done, regardless of habitual sin, regardless of what pain and shame we try to keep hidden.

Advent

Advent: More Than a Chocolate Calendar
Fr. Mike says it’s good to prepare ourselves for Christmas during Advent, but ultimately that’s not what the liturgical season is about. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus had to stay in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn. Will you use this season to make room for Jesus in your life?

Week One - Adore: Advent with Fr. John Burns
Father John explores how to journey deeper into Advent and your faith. Available on Formed.

Scripture and Catechism

Read and reflect on Luke 9:57-62.
Spend some time reading and reflecting on what it means to follow Jesus. Optionally, listen to Father Mike Schmitz Bible in a Year Podcast to learn more about this scripture reading.

The Bible in a Year
with Fr. Mike Schmitz
Day 316: Absolute Surrender

Consider Reading the Catechism of the Catholic Church
The Catechism of the Catholic Church is an outstanding explanation of all the teachings of the Catholic Church. You can read about this sessions topic online for free, or you can pick up a copy of the Catechism from the St Patrick's bookstore.

Read paragraphs 2012-2016

Day 265:"Call to Holiness" w/Fr. Mike

Additional Reading Options

Following Jesus

Following Jesus - Catholic Journal
Are we repeat offenders or do we embrace all that we can to become better followers of Jesus? Read this article for a greater understanding of this principle.

Why do I follow Jesus?
Pope Francis asks why do we follow Jesus and expounds on three harmful attitudes we, as sinners, might have while seeking the Lord.

Advent

What Is Advent Anyway?
This is a good primer from the National Catholic Register on what Advent is as well as a history of Advent wreaths and discussion of a few other Advent activities.

Joyful Expectation: In Advent, Be Intentional About Waiting
This article explores a deeper aspect of Advent: waiting – in particular, waiting patiently, hopefully, and joyfully.

We are Here to Help!

We want your feedback!

These resources are designed for your family, and we want to continue to improve them to better meet your needs.
Share with us your favorite activities, standout options that work well, as well as the resources that might have missed the mark.

Send us photos from your family working on these activities at home! We want to see your family's faith in action!

Contact Us

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