



GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study

#85 - January 2018

A Best Practice: Invitations to Empower Faith-Sharing

Often adults, especially parents, express their feeling that they don't know enough about their faith. They are hesitant to talk about their faith; they shy away from participating in adult faith formation because they fear not knowing as much as the others; they are insecure in their ability to share faith and pass on faith to others.

It is certainly true that they (all of us!) can always learn more, can always understand and appreciate more deeply. At the same time, are they selling themselves short? (Have we perpetuated that?)

One of the foundational principles of adult learning reminds us:

Adults come to any learning experience with a foundation of life experiences and knowledge.

They have opinions, perceptions and knowledge to share. Most adults do not come to have religion "pumped into them," but to have faith drawn out of them because of the rich experience they already have.

Adults need to be treated with respect, acknowledging the wealth of experiences they bring. They, as learners, need to be treated as equals in experience and knowledge.

How might we:

- respect the experiences – the God experiences – already in their lives?

- respectfully provide an environment and opportunities for them to reflect on how much they already "know," how much they have already experienced?
- empower them to share their faith experiences with others?
- nudge them to continuing growth?

How might our supportive invitations help them to realize how much they do know, how much faith is already embodied in their lives?

Let's explore this challenge through ideas and suggestions in three areas:

- Reminders and guidelines
- Invitations to give to our parishioners
- Suggestions and resources we might provide



Some reminders and guidelines for us to remember

- Create safe spaces and places for adult to question; share gifts, stories, experiences, struggles and joys; collaborate; reflect on their faith journey.
- During adult/parent gatherings, use questions for conversation that enable them to share from their everyday faith life (rather than questions that convey the idea that they need to be theologians).

Instead of "What is the meaning of the Sacrament of Reconciliation?" ask "Recall a time when someone forgave you. What did that feel like?"

- Review your website. What information/formation is there that has been done by pastor/staff? (E.g.: prayers for each day of Advent; suggestions for Lenten practices/resolutions; faith reflections on current events, etc.)

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- Affirm, invite, communicate, inform and form today's adults in every possible way:
 - F2F (Face-to-face) or INF (In the flesh): liturgy, retreats, days of reflection, workshops, book clubs, support groups, service, etc.
 - Print: mailings, newsletters, bulletins, etc.
 - Digital: Live feeds, podcasts, webinars, blogs, website, apps, text and email, Facebook, Twitter



Some invitations to extend to our parishioners

- Invite the adults (and families) of the parish to reflect on one (or more) of these topics; share their thoughts via the Sunday bulletin, the parish website, parish blog, Facebook, etc.:

- What song reminds you of God?
 - What is your favorite Scripture passage?
 - What book did you read this year which deepened your spirituality, your awareness of God?
 - What is your favorite tradition practiced in your family (prayer, seasonal, celebrations, etc.)
 - Where did you see God today? See [When God Winks: http://www.whengodwinks.com/](http://www.whengodwinks.com/)
- Invite parishioners to use the cameras on their iPads and iPhones for a picture of the day:
 - How did you see love today?
 - Where did you see God today?
 - When did you experience kindness today?
 - Today's photo of Advent (or Lent or...); see: <http://lecfamily.org/lent/>

- Invite adults to pray with photos and paintings
 - Visio Divina: <https://www.facebook.com/Visio-Divina-188623487923909/>
 - Prayer Windows: <http://www.prayerwindows.com/>
 - The Visual Faith Project: <https://www.vibrantfaith.org/visualfaith/>



- Have a regular feature on your parish website and/or Sunday bulletin. Rather than being written by parish staff, invite your parishioners to take turns researching, reflecting and writing:
 - Faith Thought of the Day
 - Daily Gospel Reflection
 - Reflection on the Sunday Readings
 - Saint of the Day
 - Today's Everyday Prayer
- Publish your own parish booklet of reflections written by parishioners (they can also be shared via email, Facebook, website, bulletin):
 - Advent/Christmas season
 - Lent/Easter season
 - Stations of the Cross
 - Everyday Psalms written by everyday people
 - Grandparents' Reflections
 - Lent (or Advent, or Easter...) through the eyes of parents (or women, or singles, or ...)
- Record short interviews (podcasts and/or videos) to post on your website, for instance:
 - Grandparents: What do you remember about your First Communion?
 - Young adults: What is your hope for our world? Our church?

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- New parents: What did you experience during the celebration of your child's baptism? What will you remember? What are you doing/will you do to keep the promises you made?
- Everyone: What Advent/Christmas ritual helps you to celebrate the season?
- Everyone: What is your favorite way to pray? When do you pray?
- RCIA Candidates: Why did you decide to come into the Catholic Church?
- RCIA Sponsors: What will you remember about your journey with our catechumens/candidates?

- Adults (and children and youth) participate in many outreach opportunities in the parish and community. Deepening formation happens when people have an opportunity to reflect on their experiences.

Following an outreach event (the Advent Giving Tree, visiting patients in the hospital, Meals on Wheels, serving at a soup kitchen, etc.), invite people to reflection – individually, with their families, in small groups:



- What did I learn about myself during this opportunity?
- How has my world view been affected? Do I see more connections, concerns, conflicts? If so, what are they?
- How did I feel about sharing myself in service to others?
- What will I do now?

Share their responses in the Sunday bulletin, on Facebook, on the parish website.

We do not learn from experience;
we learn from reflecting on experience.
- John Dewey



Some suggestions and resources we might provide

- Encourage – and provide resources for – prayer at home, for individuals, spouses, and families.
 - See [GEMS #50](#).
 - [Sacred Space: https://www.sacredspace.ie/](https://www.sacredspace.ie/)
 - [3 Minute Retreat: http://www.loyolapress.com/3-minute-retreats-daily-online-prayer](http://www.loyolapress.com/3-minute-retreats-daily-online-prayer)
 - [Pray As You Go: https://www.pray-as-you-go.org/home/](https://www.pray-as-you-go.org/home/)
- Encourage adults – and families – to notice the holy wherever they are. At a game, a practice, a social gathering, etc., look around: what do you see, smell, hear, touch or taste that is sacred and holy?
- Provide home kits (for individual or family use) around a specific theme, e.g. Lent, the Eucharist, Catholic Social Teaching, etc.
- Invite adults (and families) to celebrate Milestone moments. See [GEMS #83](#).
- Record and post short videos on some of the foundations of our faith, for instance:
 - What is church?
 - How do we understand the Trinity?
 - Some Tips for Reading – and Praying – Scripture
 - What is Lent all about?

For some ideas, see the Two Minute videos on Busted Halo:
<http://bustedhalo.com/category/video>.

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- On your parish website, list the activities happening in other parishes, retreat centers, colleges, book stores, etc. – activities for formation, payer, service, etc.
- Create table talk cards for families to use during meal times—providing time to connect, share highs and lows from the day, and celebrate God’s promise and presence in everyday life.
- Provide conversation starters for all the time that families are spending in the car coming and going from activities.
- Partner young families with older, experienced, spiritually strong families in a mentoring relationship for support, best practices, and encouragement.



Golden Nuggets from You

“[GEMS #64](#) is beautiful ... and so timely as we are launching a Grandparenting group this summer at St. Joe's!”

*Kathy Hasty, Pastoral Minister,
St. Joseph Parish, Lake Orion MI*

“I have been passing GEMS around to everyone and [#66](#) is very interesting to me also because we are searching for a way to keep in touch with children, parents, grandparents from birth to five years old. Then I read about Arai Angels in [GEMS #66](#); it is going directly to our Family Faith Formation Director.”

*Gerry Fedor, Queen of the Universe Parish,
Levittown, PA*



Adding New Luster to Older GEMS

Several [past issues of GEMS](#) have focused on hospitality (#3-9; #15-18; #46-48; #56-58), Check these ideas and resources for more ideas and practical suggestions:

- Car Blessings in the Church parking lot:
<https://www.buildfaith.org/car-blessings/>
- Radical Hospitality for the Rest of Us:
<http://godspacelight.com/2017/07/20/radical-hospitality-video/>
- Six Reasons to Sit in a Different Seat at Church this weekend:
<http://chucklawless.com/2017/08/6-reasons-to-sit-in-a-different-seat-at-church-this-weekend/?utm>
- Guests of the Word, Hosts to the World:
<http://godspacelight.com/2017/07/03/meditation-monday-guests-of-the-world-hosts-to-the-world/>



Janet Schaeffler, OP

www.janetschaeffler.com
jschaeffler@adriandominicans.org

Past issues of **GEMS** are archived at www.janetschaeffler.com

Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found in:

- *Deepening Faith: Adult Faith Formation in the Parish*
<https://www.litpress.org/Products/4652/Deepening-Faith>
- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation*
http://www.lifelongfaith.com/store/p25/The_Seasons_of_Adult_Faith_Formation.html
- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation website*
<http://www.lifelongfaith.com/2015-adult-faith-formation-symposium.html>