

August 1, 2006

Dear Parishioner,

You may have heard or read that we are completely restructuring the way in which we approach Christian Formation here at St. John Neumann Parish. We are adopting an approach that is called "Generations of Faith." It is an approach which views Christian Formation as being life-long and event centered. What does that mean?

In the past, the major focus of Christian Formation was assumed to be children and youth. ***But in a life-long formation approach, the major focus is the entire community.*** That's why you will also sometimes hear the phrase "Whole Community Catechesis."

In the past, classes were usually weekly, and lasted about an hour or so. ***But now we will be meeting once a month for about three hours and everyone is invited to stay.***

Why are we making this change?

- + Because positive growth is always good.
- + Because any change which helps support adults, youth, and children grow in their faith is good.
- + Because providing the means to help Catholics of all ages share faith and faith experiences *between* the ages is very, very good.

What will this look like?

Each session, or event, will have a similar structure, or feel, to it.

1. We'll gather for a simple meal (or perhaps end with one).
2. We'll have an opening experience which will set the tone and theme of the event.
3. We'll have a designated "learning session" - in which people may or may not be divided into age appropriate groups (depending on the focus of the event)
4. We'll have a Whole Group Sharing opportunity—in which the people from the small groups will be able to share what they have learned.
5. We'll have a "home kit" which will allow each household to continue the experience at home.

What will stay the same?

While Generations of Faith is our primary approach to life-long formation, there are still components that will not change.

- + We'll still have sacramental preparation for Baptism, First Eucharist, First Reconciliation, Confirmation
- + We'll still have youth service projects, small groups, retreats, work camps and the like
- + We'll still have adult formation opportunities such as days of reflection, scriptures sessions, and small group discussions on a variety of topics

Then what is really changing?

We will not be meeting on a weekly basis for classroom type study. We will be meeting on a monthly basis for about three hours and everyone is invited to participate in the event or festival experience.

What do you mean by "festival?"

Event centered catechesis focuses on the truth that the Church is a living being more than it is an institution. There is a beat to the rhythm of church life which pulses throughout the entire church year. Gathering weekly to worship as the believing People of God, in Generations of Faith we begin to acquire a new and richer depth for the "why" of our Gatherings. We become more aware of the events we celebrate during the Church Year and become more engaged in the actual celebrations themselves. We begin to recognize that these weekly gatherings for worship and seasonal changes are not merely what we *do* but express who we *are* as the Body of Christ. They become festive gatherings, celebrated with joy, passion, and belief.

What about registrations and cost?

Formal registration for Generations of Faith will take place in September. You will not be registering your child for a specific grade, you will be registering the entire household of faith for a particular session of formation.

If there is someone within the household who is ready to prepare to celebrate a sacrament, there will be a place on the registration form to indicate that. Information will be available at the registration or "on line" at our website (www.sjnwauk.org) or by calling or emailing June Wessa at either 262-549-0223, ext. 17 or wessaj@archmil.org.

We are going to make a concerted effort in keeping the cost of Generations of Faith down. That information will be available prior to registration. You'll be able to pay when you register.

When are the sessions going to be held?

Included with this informational letter is a "session option guide." We are looking for feedback from you to determine which days and times will be most supportive of your life challenges. We will try to provide enough options that every household will see this as a "do-able" opportunity.

Filling out and returning the session options sheet as soon as possible will help us put the schedule together.

How is this approach going to be different from using the textbooks?

Generations of Faith provides many resources and is designed to allow maximum flexibility for the individual parish. For example, a major event that is specific to our community this coming year is the fact that we will be celebrating our twenty-fifth anniversary as a parish. Bishop Sklba will be joining us at the beginning of December to declare a jubilee year. In the biblical concept of "jubilee" there is great emphasis on celebration, gratitude, reconciliation, beginning again. The timing of our decision to become a Generations of Faith parish in the same year as our 25th Jubilee seems graced by God. There is no doubt that you will see the imprint of our specific cause for jubilation evident each time we gather in Generations of Faith.

This sounds like it's going to be a lot of work and involve a lot of people. What will you expect me to do?

Generations of Faith is a great deal of work (especially the first year) and does require the work of many people to be effective. There are three major "teams" with this program. The CORE Team creates the curriculum plan and guides its implementation. The DESIGN TEAM creates the learning designs for the individual events. The IMPLEMENTATION TEAM conducts the events themselves. Included as part of the session options sheet you'll find an opportunity to volunteer for an area of involvement that suits your abilities. We welcome and encourage as much participation from you as possible.

"The Church does not have an educational program: it IS an educational program"

(Maria Harris: Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church)

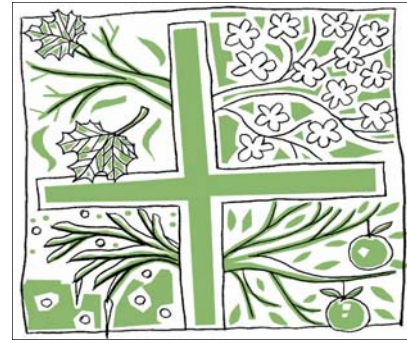
The CORE Team for Generations of Faith:

Fr. Jim Loehr
June Wessa
Marilyn Lieske
Nancy Eggener
Kathleen Eull
Ronan James
Denise Jensen

Madonna Rouiller
Betsy Novak
Steve Nekola
Danette Paquette
Julie Schramke
Robin Wiedenhoef
Suzanne Johnson



Generations of Faith Session Option Guide



We are seeking specific information from you that will be of great help as we plan to implement Generations of Faith as our primary form of Life-long Learning here at St. John Neumann Parish. **Please fill out this form, completely and return it no later than August 13, 2006. Fill out both sides, please.**

Generations of Faith is an event centered gathering of the Households of Faith. Because of the size and number of households at SJN, we will need to schedule more than one session each month. Which of the following sessions would you and your entire household be likely to attend on a regular basis? **Please mark each option as your first, second, third choice, whichever applies.** This will help us determine what days of the week and what times will best serve our community.

Saturday morning from 9:00am—noon (*finish* with lunch) _____

Saturday afternoon from noon—3:00pm (*begin* with lunch) _____

Saturday evening from 6:00pm-9:00pm (*begin* with supper) _____

Sunday afternoon from noon-3:00pm (*begin* with lunch) _____

Sunday evening from 4:00pm-7:00pm (*end* with supper) _____

Wednesday evening from 6:00pm-9:00pm (*begin* with supper) _____

The above suggested options would be offered on the same week of each month, with a published calendar. As a rule, each household of faith would participate in the same day and time slot from month-to-month. Some flexibility would be allowed. Advanced registration would be expected.

PLEASE PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

Age range of each participant: attending: not attending:

Infant to age 3yrs (requiring babysitting) _____

4 years old through sixth grade _____

7th grade through high school _____

Young adult (18yrs thru 39) _____

Adults (40 years and up) _____

Generations of Faith Volunteer Sheet

In order for Generations of Faith to be effective and successful, the parish will need many volunteers. **Please indicate those areas in which you would be willing to participate.**

DESIGN TEAM:

(This team has the primary responsibility for creating the learning designs for Church events. The team's major tasks include:)

Designing the preparation programs by selecting and/or creating the learning activities for the event. (This means either choosing the materials offered by GOF and/or creating our own for a particular event). Resources are provided. _____

Creating home kits and activities for a variety of ages and settings (for example, participants in the preparation programs, parishioners at Mass) _____

Designing reflection activities _____

Preparing the learning materials _____

IMPLEMENTATION TEAM:

(This team has the primary responsibility for conducting the preparation programs.)

Event facilitator (leads the event) _____

Learning group facilitator (a leader for a specific Group in the learning session of the event) _____

Facilitators & catechists for age-appropriate Learning groups _____

Assistants to help with the activities _____

Prayer leader for opening and/or closing prayer _____

Music leader and/or music team for prayer & activities _____

Set-up and clean-up staff _____

Food preparation and service staff _____

Creative arts staff for artwork, posters, signs, etc. _____

Promotion and correspondence staff _____

Hospitality and registration staff _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE #: _____

CELL PHONE #: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

All volunteers will receive complete training and total support for all activities from the professional staff.