



# Catechesis Supplement

## Family of Faith program builds community, helps parents catechize

By Natalie Hoefer

When Kim Getman was hired as director of religious education for St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Bedford and St. Mary Parish in Mitchell in 2022, the parishes' pastor Father Jegan Peter gave her a mission.

"He wanted me to create a program that would do two things," she says. "One—that brought all of our different family groups together, including public school, home school and St. Vincent de Paul School families. And two—that provided the tools, knowledge and confidence for parents to catechize their family."



Kim Getman

Thanks to the Holy Spirit, Getman says, she discovered Sophia Institute's "A Family of Faith" catechetical program that summer and implemented it that fall.

The four-year program centers on a different pillar of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* each year. Families of the two faith communities meet twice a month. The first meeting focuses on age-specific catechesis, and the second involves a topic-related group activity.

"The books and material have lessons for parents to do with their children at home on the off weeks," says Getman. "The program is really geared toward catechizing the parents and making sure they're comfortable catechizing their children."

Before each meeting, all parishioners—whether participating in the program or not—are invited to a pitch-in meal for fellowship.

Getman says she and Father Peter "both feel very pleased that we see the two directives being met."

"There's really good fellowship and relationships being formed between parishes and among all of the family groups. And we also have parents who feel more comfortable catechizing their children at home, feeling more confident about their ability to share their faith with their family."



Fr. Jegan Peter

### 'Everyone has a place to go'

Father Peter says his desire for such a program stemmed from his observations when he became pastor of the two Lawrence County parishes in 2020.

"In a religious and social context, [Lawrence County] is mainly dominated by many non-Catholic and Pentecostal churches," he says. "Hence, our presence here is vital to evangelize Christ and bring our Catholic faith and identity."

"It is a growing community where many spiritual



Father Jegan Peter, pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Bedford and St. Mary Parish in Mitchell, poses in St. Vincent de Paul's school gym with some of the children involved in the two faith communities' Family of Faith catechetical program. (Submitted photo)

warfare and social challenges exist and come into play in our ministry as a united faith community and in [St. Vincent de Paul's] school. I could sense a great need for faith formation to define and distinguish our identity in this county."

Plus, with the isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, he realized the need to strengthen the bonds within and between the two parishes that form the Catholic Community of Lawrence County.

The task of creating such a program was daunting, Getman says.

When she attended the 2022 St. John Bosco Conference on catechesis in Steubenville, Ohio, shortly after being hired, she turned the mission over to the Holy Spirit.

"Very quickly," she says, she met a representative at the conference from Sophia Institute who shared about its "A Family of Faith" program. It perfectly met Father Peter's vision.

The program's two monthly meetings focus on a given catechetical topic of that year's theme.

The first meeting is focused primarily on catechesis. With catechists in six breakout groups providing age-specific instruction, participants "show up as a whole family, and everyone has a place to go," says Getman.

The second monthly meeting involves a group activity related to the month's catechetical lesson.

"Sometimes it's a service project, like going to a park and talking about care for creation, then picking up trash and hiking," Getman explains. "Or it could be a family prayer service. Or sometimes the large group session might involve a craft project where each child or family will make a craft to take home that affirms the lesson."

Parents use the program's books and material between meetings to continue catechizing their children on the month's topic at home.

"I've been pleasantly surprised to see how eager the parents are to do the lessons and say, 'Yes, I need help explaining this teaching to my child,'" says Getman. "This is a wonderful way for them to grow in

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## Catechesis reminds Catholics of the reasons for their hope in Christ

Beginnings are naturally times of hope, and the beginning of a new faith formation year around Catechetical

Sunday is no different. As disciples of Christ, leaning into hope is indeed a trademark for us.

The theme for Catechetical Sunday on Sept. 21 in this Jubilee Year of Hope picks this up by telling us: "Always be ready to give an explanation ... for a reason for your hope" (1 Pt 3:15).

When we use the word "catechesis," we very often mean religious education. But catechesis is not just teaching facts and doctrine. It is meant to help us who have encountered Christ and have chosen to follow him to get to know better this person, this God, whom we are following so that we can firmly hope in what he promised us.

Therefore, catechesis needs to do

two things. First, it needs to tell us what Christ promised us, to remind us why we made a good decision to follow him and why God is trustworthy. Second, it needs to get us ready to tell others who are not yet following Christ (or have just started) what our hope is and the reason why we keep following the Lord.

It is noteworthy that 1 Peter 3:15 is a quote from a passage on Christian suffering. We all know that the problem of pain and suffering is one of the greatest hurdles on our faith journey. For some, it is so big that they never really get started on their way.

Unfortunately, after the fall of Adam and Eve, pain and suffering are just a fact of life that we cannot avoid completely. And yet, as followers of Christ we have hope. We believe in Christ's promise that we are not stuck in suffering, that our suffering has meaning and our lives still have purpose. He helps us to get through the hard times and assures us that the pain will not win because, by his suffering,

he conquered sin and death and opened the door to heaven where there will be no more tears.

If we believe that, it is because Christ already showed up for us. If we are already disciples, then we have made at some point a decision to believe and to follow Christ because we perceived him to be truly present in our lives. Maybe something happened that could only have been divine intervention. Maybe we read a Scripture passage and felt like God was speaking directly to us. Maybe another person made us seen, known and loved in a way that convinced us that God himself sees, knows and loves us.

And if we have been disciples for a while, there is most likely more than one of these moments. They do not have to be big and dramatic; many are little but powerful reminders of God's goodness and presence. Because of these reminders we remain firmly rooted in our hope, even during suffering. What is your story?

We are all called by our baptism

to go and make disciples. Pope St. Paul VI wrote: "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he listens to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." You become a witness by sharing your stories. Help our catechists serving in parishes across central and southern Indiana to make disciples by sharing your stories freely!

If you want to share your story with me, please e-mail me at [ueble@archindy.org](mailto:ueble@archindy.org). And if you really feel like you have no story to share, may I suggest contacting your parish and joining a faith formation program or small discipleship group? Sometimes we just need to be reminded of the reason for our hope.

Thank you to all our catechists in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis for your service and for your hope.

(Ute Eble is the director of catechesis in the archdiocesan Secretariat for Evangelizing Catechesis. She can be reached at [ueble@archindy.org](mailto:ueble@archindy.org).) †





# Church’s ancient creed still shapes the lives of Catholics today

By Sean Gallagher

At each Saturday vigil and Sunday Mass and in every solemnity in the Church’s liturgical year, the faithful profess the creed.

These core Christian beliefs flow from Scripture and the Church’s sacred tradition dating back to the time of the Apostles.

This year, Christian leaders around the world are celebrating the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, held in what is now Turkey in 325. It was the first of a series of Church councils that defined dogmas found in the creed related to the Trinity and Christ’s incarnation. The creed professed at Mass, commonly called the Nicene Creed, is named after that council.

Father Daniel Mahan recently spoke with *The Criterion* about the creed and how it has shaped the life of faith of Catholics around the world and throughout its history up to the present day. He noted especially how the Church’s ancient creed is explained well for believers today in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Father Mahan is an archdiocesan priest who serves as director of the Institute on the Catechism of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and is author of the award-winning 2024 book, *A Journey through the Catechism*.

## The creed in the catechism

In his interview, Father Mahan, citing an image used by St. John Paul II, described the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as a “symphony of faith.”

“In the first movement of a symphony, you hear the themes that are going to play out in the remaining three movements,” Father Mahan said. “Such is the same with the first part of the catechism that follows the outline of the creed. You hear those themes that are going to be echoed and built upon in the remaining part of the catechism.”

To illustrate this concept, Father Mahan focused on how the creed explains the incarnation of Christ, how he, as the Son of God, became fully human, including having a human body.

The second part of the catechism, Father Mahan noted, lays out how the body of Christ is related to the Church’s worship, especially the Eucharist, which he said is “the re-presentation of the perfect sacrifice of his body on the cross that is made present in every offering of the holy Mass, albeit in an unbloody manner.”

The third part of the catechism, focusing on the Church’s moral teachings, applies what the creed says about the body of Christ to how Catholics live out their faith today.

“Our faith in the triune God is not just an intellectual exercise,” Father Mahan said. “Our faith is in the God who becomes flesh, makes his dwelling among us and who teaches us through his physical passion, death and resurrection that our faith in him must be lived out in a multitude of practical ways.”

This teaching, Father Mahan said, helps Catholics to follow the saying of St. Augustine of Hippo, “ ‘to become him whom we receive’ [in Communion] and be able to live out our faith and be Christ’s presence in the world.”

The fourth and final part of the catechism, focusing on prayer, explains in depth the Lord’s Prayer, which is prayed at Mass just before Communion.



Father Daniel Mahan preaches a homily during an April 27, 2023, Mass at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Church in Aurora. He currently serves as director of the Institute on the Catechism of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. (File photo by Sean Gallagher)

Father Mahan noted that the part of that prayer that asks God for “our daily bread” is rendered in its original Greek as “*epiousion*,” which is translated literally as “super-essential.”

He said that, in this part of the prayer, believers are asking God to “give us not just bread for our table, not just what we need to survive in this life, but give us that super-substantial bread. Give us the bread of life. Give us the body of Christ in the holy Eucharist. That’s what we’re praying for as we prepare for holy Communion.”

## The creed in history and today

Father Mahan spoke about the danger Christians faced in the early history of the Church in professing their faith in Christ, a faith that eventually developed into the creed professed today.

The earliest form of the creed, he said, was the Christian claim, in Greek, that Christ was “*kyrios*” (“Lord”).

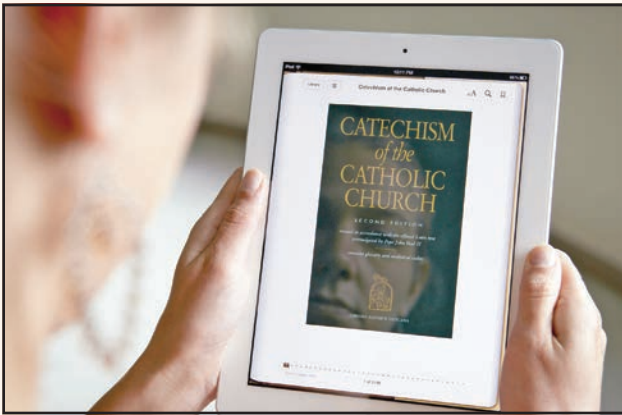
“That phrase directly contradicted the claim of Caesar,” Father Mahan said. “*Kyrios* was the title for Caesar. Caesar is *kyrios*. But early Christians said that Jesus is *kyrios*. That was sufficient to land them in jail and have them thrown to the lions. It was very subversive.”

Today, he continued, Christians face pressure of various degrees in professing their faith.

“Being a follower of Jesus is met with the rolling of eyes, at the least, among many,” Father Mahan said. “For some of our brothers and sisters in the Lord in other parts of the world, it means persecution and painful death.”

What Catholics profess in the creed is tied, Father Mahan said, to how they live from day to day.

“We see the connection between faith and life and the



A woman displays the e-book version of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* on an iPad. The catechism shows how the Church’s ancient creed is related to all aspects of the faith, explains Father Daniel Mahan. (CNS photo/Nancy Wiechec)

importance of keeping our faith, living our faith come what may,” he said. “It’s the blood of the martyrs that has been the seed of the Church and, in many ways, has contributed to the solidity, the rock-solid foundation of our faith.”

Despite the challenges today to living the faith fully and consistently, Father Mahan said that Catholics can find hope in the same Holy Spirit that led the Church 1,700 years ago to begin to set forth its creed.

“There is always hope with the Holy Spirit being the breath of God to this day, just as the Holy Spirit was the driving wind on the day of Pentecost,” he said. “The Holy Spirit continues to be the breath of God that animates the life of the Church and gives us reason for hope in these troubled times of ours ... ” †



A wall fresco depicting the First Council of Nicaea can be seen in this photo taken in the Sistine hall of the Vatican Library. The council was held in 325, and its 1,700th anniversary coincides with the Holy Year 2025. (CNS photo/Carol Glatz)

# Vote of confidence leads a woman to share her love for God—and to a special award

By John Shaughnessy

To tell the story of Pam Fleming, let’s start with this truth about life:

Never underestimate the power of someone giving a vote of confidence to another person.

When Fleming was a college student living at home, she was intrigued when she saw there was an opening for a fifth-grade teacher in Sunday morning religious education at her parish, St. Michael in Greenfield.

“Something just touched me,” she recalls. “I was only 19. I called, and they said sure. That made a difference. It planted the seed of really wanting to share my faith with others. I got involved with the confirmation program there, too. I worked two or three years as a volunteer, helping the people who were leading it.”

What happened next still fills the now-60-year-old Fleming with joy.

“Father Steve Banet was the pastor at the time, and he asked me if I ever thought about being a youth minister. It was an instance where a priest saw something in me that I hadn’t seen before. I did it part-time. That confidence and that encouragement from Father Steve was phenomenal at that time. I was still in college. I know that made a huge difference in my life, to have that kind of encouragement.”

Forty years after that surprising vote of confidence, Fleming is still sharing her love and her joy for the Catholic faith with people of all ages, now as the director of faith formation and coordinator of youth ministry at St. Matthew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis.

That vote of confidence has also led to her recently being named the recipient of this year’s Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein Excellence in Catechesis Award—the highest honor the archdiocese bestows upon a faith formation leader—in honor of the late Indianapolis archbishop.

“Pam very much deserves the award because she not only loves teaching and is outstanding at it, but most of all because she shares the Gospel through her work and as a person of faith,” says Ute Eble, director of catechesis for the archdiocese.

The honor touches Fleming.

“I’m overwhelmed that someone notices your faith is shining through from you,” she says. “It warms my heart to know that maybe I am living the way Jesus wants us to live. And hopefully I can continue to do that.”

## Going the extra mile for God

To continue the story of Fleming, let’s add this truth about life:

Never underestimate the power of a person’s excitement about their faith to draw other people to a relationship with God.

“When I talk about Jesus and the saints, I have an excitement in my voice,” Fleming says. “I want them to hear my excitement.”

“Obviously, I want to draw people to the Catholic faith, and I want people to be excited about their faith, but more importantly I want them to be excited about Jesus. I want them to have a relationship with Jesus. That part is always important. Sometimes I’m planting seeds. Sometimes I’m watering the seeds.”

Fleming has lived that truth in many ways. A few weeks before she graduated from college, she



Pam Fleming, left, guides Ben Tasker in preparing for his first reconciliation as his mom, Dr. Nicole Tasker, helps. (Submitted photo)



Pam Fleming’s dedication to leading people of all ages to a deeper relationship with Christ has led to her recently being named the recipient of this year’s Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein Excellence in Catechesis Award—the highest honor the archdiocese bestows upon a faith formation leader—in honor of the late Indianapolis archbishop. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

was sitting in church one day when the thought entered her mind that she needed to do missionary work. The thought also struck her that she didn’t need to go overseas to do it. That led her to teach for a year in a Catholic school in the then-poor, shrimping community of Bayou La Batre, Ala., which was featured in *Forrest Gump*, the 1994 film that won the Academy Award for Best Picture.

More recently, she was the director of religious education at St. Andrew the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis for seven years, followed by teaching religion at Father Michael Shawe Memorial Jr./Sr. High School in Madison for four years. She is now in her fourth year at St. Matthew.

“She is so devoted, giving and creative,” says Msgr. William F. Stumpf, pastor of St. Matthew and vicar general for the archdiocese. “That comes out because of who she is, her relationship with God and her Catholic faith.”

“After she started here, she said, ‘This is my dream job. I’m getting to do everything I feel called to do—in terms of sharing my faith in a special way and still being a teacher.’ All that she does is an outpouring of her faith.”

Fleming says her life is focused on keeping “my eyes and my heart open to where God wants to lead me.”

“That’s always been a prayer of mine—to really be present to where God needs me,” she says. “And God always takes care of me wherever I go.”

She is also always willing to go the extra mile for God.

Instead of the traditional Vacation Bible School program that was offered this summer, Fleming “wanted to do something to make it even more Catholic, truly Catholic.” So, she developed her own program, “Mama Mary, Holy and Blessed,” a program that drew the young children into the life of the Blessed Mother and her appearances to children at Fatima and Lourdes.

“One day, the kids were given holy water,” she recalls. “The next day, a mom said her small child came to her and said, ‘Mom, would you bless me with this holy water?’ There was story after story like that. Another time, we

took a statue of Mary, put it on the floor, and they were able to crown her with flowers. The kids really took it in. The parents and volunteers were blown away by how the children were touched by it. Mama Mary really came through.”

## Paying it forward

For Fleming—who has also helped to develop a faith program for adults with physical and developmental disabilities—everything flows back to this truth:

Never underestimate the power of making God the heart of your life, and never underestimate the Holy Spirit as a source of strength and guidance.

“I know I can turn to God at any time and for any reason,” she says. “I’ve also learned to appreciate the role the Holy Spirit plays in our lives. I think that made a big difference, too. I feel more strongly with the Holy Spirit in me. Learning to embrace the third person in the Trinity keeps me going even more.”

She pauses before adding, “I’ve had an awesome life. But to say you have an awesome life doesn’t mean it hasn’t come with struggles here and there. Yet through the ups and downs, it just helps to know that God is always there. It’s such a comfort to feel God’s compassion, to feel God’s mercy.”

One of the major “ups” in her life recently came when she was married for the first time two years ago.

“I get to share things with my husband about what goes on at work, and we both get excited,” she says about David. “Being able to share my faith with him, and how he shares with me, one helps the other.”

She uses a similar approach in faith formation, inviting and including parents in their children’s journeys to receiving their first Communion and the sacrament of confirmation.

“I want to help parents be there for their children, to let them know the Holy Spirit is with them and that they’re not on their own. Anytime I’m preparing the teens or children for a sacrament, I always have the parents there at the meetings. I want them to really see what’s being taught. For some of them, it’s a great refresher. For some of them, they’re hearing it for the first time, or it comes to them in a different light now. Hopefully I’m a role model to them that the Holy Spirit really is with us.”

She sees her life and all her efforts in faith formation as a way of “paying it forward” for that vote of confidence that Father Banet gave her 40 years ago.

“That is what I’m doing,” she says. “I want them to get to a point, children or adults, to take their faith forward. Even to have a conversation with others. Having Jesus as part of the conversation doesn’t mean you’re coming across preaching. You’re sharing—to be happy in your faith, this Catholic faith, this gift that Christ gave us.

“I do feel like I’m passing that on. I’ve had a life of being able to share this gift with others.” †



# Workshop helps teachers, youth ministers, coaches nurture hope in teens

By Sean Gallagher

GREENWOOD—As youths across central and southern Indiana began another year of school, youth ministry programming and athletic competition, adults who minister to them gathered on Aug. 9 at Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood to be encouraged and grow deeper in their service.

The archdiocesan Office of Youth Ministry sponsored its “Into the Heart” workshop that day to help staff members of Catholic schools, those involved in youth ministry and Catholic Youth Organization teams grow in their knowledge of the faith and how to help youths grow in their own relationship with Christ and the Church.

This year’s workshop focused on the theological virtue of hope, which is at the heart of the Church’s ongoing Jubilee Year of Hope.

## Christ is ‘the ultimate Good Samaritan’

Father Michael Keucher, archdiocesan vocations director and pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Shelbyville and St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Shelby County, spoke at the workshop about how Christ is the foundation of a very specific hope of all believers.

Hope for Catholics, Father Keucher said, “is not just thinking better thoughts or being optimistic. It’s knowing that Jesus Christ is in charge and that Jesus Christ is love.”

Christ’s parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37), Father Keucher said, is a dramatic and touching illustration of how Christ gives believers hope.

He described Christ as “the ultimate Good Samaritan” and said that every person is, in one way or another, like the man left half-dead in a ditch.

“He comes along this road and in great love, in humility, kneels down and says, ‘I am not going to leave you here.’ In love, he binds up our wounds,” Father Keucher said.

The oil that the Samaritan pours into the wounds of the man is symbolic of the sacraments, while the inn where the Samaritan took the wounded man is symbolic of the Church, Father Keucher explained.

Seeing Gospel passages like the parable of the Good Samaritan in this way can lead youths and those who minister to them into a deeper relationship with Christ.

“We are invited to this relationship with him that is personal, beautiful and wonderful,” Father Keucher said. “When we are best friends with Jesus, then we know that we will always have hope, because he is all that is good. He is love. He is beauty. He is safety. He is all these things. He is going to take us home one day, ultimately, to heaven.”

A key to foster a hope-filled relationship with Christ in youths, Father Keucher advised, is to take them to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

“If we take our kids in our youth groups, our teams, our classes to Jesus in the tabernacle, if we take our kids literally in front of Jesus, he will do the rest,” Father Keucher said. “He does incredible things. He

will speak to their hearts. I know him because he has spoken to my heart in dark moments in my life.

“When we take our kids to Jesus, he will do the rest. He’ll restore hope.”

## ‘Count on hope’ to transform us

Later in the workshop, Jake Teitgen, director of communications and advancement at Our Lady of Grace Parish in Noblesville, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese, reflected on how hope can transform the lives of youths and how teachers, youth ministers and coaches can be channels of such transforming hope.

He reminded his listeners of the “incredible privilege” they have in being a part of the lives of the young people they serve and simply observing their lives.

“Sometimes we can lose sight of just how much of a privilege that is,” Teitgen said. “Really, at the end of the day, having the opportunity to even notice young people and affirm the things that are going well in their life, to be a companion when things are not going well, is a tremendous opportunity.”

But while Teitgen encouraged those at the workshop to step back and be grateful for the blessing of observing the ever-changing lives of the youths whom they serve, he said they should also be mindful that they themselves are being watched, too.

“Christ is the one who gazes upon us,” said Teitgen. “And when we are gazed upon by Christ, we are transformed, and we see with a new perspective.”

Christ gazing upon adults gives them transforming hope that they can then pass it on to the youths that they serve.

“When we say that hope transforms, hope doesn’t transform God,” Teitgen said. “Hope doesn’t really even transform the very real problems of the world. The only thing we can really count on hope to transform is us. That the way we see things, the perspective we have, is transformed by hope.”

Teitgen also reminded his listeners that the work they do with youths in nurturing transforming hope in their lives might take a very long time to come to full flower.

To illustrate this reality, Teitgen told the story of Antonio Gaudi, the Spanish architect who designed the famous La Sagrada Familia Basilica in Barcelona and who died in 1926, during the early days of the church’s construction.



Jake Teitgen



Father Michael Keucher gives a presentation on hope to people who serve archdiocesan youths. The talk was part of the Into the Heart workshop, sponsored by the archdiocesan Office of Youth Ministry, held at Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood on Aug. 9. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

Teitgen told his listeners that Gaudi, whose cause for beatification and canonization is being considered by the Vatican, knew well that he would never see the completion of the great vision he had for the basilica.

“The reason he felt like he could do that is because he said that the patron of this project [God] was not in a hurry,” Teitgen said. “He had that vision of God gazing upon us and knowing it’s OK for us to play the long game and not see how this all plays out.”

Teitgen then encouraged his listeners to take the same approach with the youths they serve.

“Do we look at our young people as precious gifts in whom we hope and are willing to take our time?” he asked those at the workshop. “Do we believe that they can someday inspire awe at a glimpse of the divine? Do we believe that they are all masterpieces, still under work? Are we willing to start on that work that we will never see come to fruition? God has that kind of hope in us. Can we offer that kind of hope to others?”

Juanita Bruggeman is the office manager at St. Charles Borromeo School in Bloomington. When she saw that “hope” was the topic of the Into the Heart workshop, she knew that she wanted to attend.

“This is what we do every day,” said Bruggeman. “As Catholics, everything that we do, we do in faith, love and hope. So, hope is a very important part of our lives. If you don’t have hope, then you can’t expect a better future.”

She also acknowledged the importance for herself and her colleagues of nurturing hope in the students at St. Charles, knowing that they’ll leave the school after the eighth grade and will experience many changes in their lives afterward.

“They are still a work in progress, an unfinished masterpiece,” Bruggeman said. “That’s why we have to nurture hope in them. We might never see the end-result in our lifetime. You just hope that whatever seeds you plant in them will be enough.” †

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knowledge of the faith, but also how to share it with their children.”

## ‘Families model the faith for each other’

Community- and relationship-building are a core part of Family of Faith, not just in the group activities but also in the pitch-in meal before each meeting.

The meal was initially intended for the program’s participants. But it “has just grown and blossomed and taken on a life of its own, which is beautiful and what you want to have happen,” says Getman.

That growth began when two older women “heard about the program, and it touched their hearts,” she says.

“They said, ‘Oh, these working parents don’t have time to prepare a meal. Send us the sign-up sheet!’ And they got many volunteers from people not involved in the program—retired people, grandparents—to start making meals.”

When they noticed other groups met at St. Vincent de Paul at the same time as the Family of Faith, the two women invited the groups to share in the dinner.

“We’re now feeding between 90 to 95 people at every meal,” says Getman. “The older parishioners really enjoy helping in this way. It’s really neat to see the different generations get involved.”

She calls the fellowship time during the meal “just essential” for several reasons, one being the strengthening of community.

When Krisana Martine and her mother Joan Martine enrolled in the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) at St. Vincent de Paul in the fall of 2023, they appreciated eating with the Family of Faith participants before going to OCIA classes.

“A lot of the Family of Faith members were encouraging and helped with all the information we were taking in,” says Krisana.

Joan agreed, noting that they got to know their OCIA instructor better during the meals.

“He and several other people we met at the dinners are friends now,” she says.

Now as Catholics, the duo is teaming up to coordinate the nursery room for the Family of Faith program this fall.

That room will soon include Anthony and Jackie Baratta’s weeks-old newborn—their sixth child.

As catechists for a similar parish in Ohio, the couple was familiar with Family of Faith.

“So, when we moved to the area here, it felt natural to join [Family of Faith] and meet new people” through the meals and classes, says Anthony.

“It’s hard to get to know parishioners in the few minutes after Mass. So, we’re grateful for this opportunity not only for our kids to get to know other kids at St. Vincent de Paul and the Catholic Community of Lawrence County, but also for us to get to know the parents. We’ve made many friends from Family of Faith.”

He believes one of the program’s “most important benefits is kids seeing other Catholics practice their faith and feeling comfortable speaking about their faith.”

Getman says the meal and program activities are valuable in that sense.

“Our end-of-year surveys show the value of children interacting with other families and seeing those parents model the faith for them,” she says.

Offering catechesis classes where “parents drop off their children” are beneficial, too, Getman notes.

“But there’s value in children coming together and seeing, ‘These are my friends, and these are their families,

and this is important to them.’ The families model the faith for each other, and the fellowship component is vital for that.”

**‘Knitted together in Christ’**

Father Peter says the two faith communities “have been blessed” as the they begin the fourth year of the program.

“Many young families have shown great interest and made a significant impact on the life of the parishes,” he says. “We can see the fruits of this program through the knowledge of our kids and the participation of parents in adult catechism classes.

“And many of our parishioners have expressed their joyful moments of being in this community experience and knitted together in Christ as the Catholic family in Lawrence County.”

Getman attributes the program’s success to the Holy Spirit.

“When Father first told me about his idea, I told him I didn’t think I could make it happen until the next year,” she says.

“But then I met the Sophia Institute representative at the conference. And the Holy Spirit said, ‘The time is now, and here’s how we’re going to make it happen.’

“And it all came together.” †