



# Family & Teen Faith Listening Sessions Summary Report May 2016

(This edition includes quotes from respondents)

## Who participated?

- 35 catechists (45% response)
- 65 parents (15% response)
- 108 students (15% response)

## How was the Information gathered?

- Seven group listening sessions
- Online survey sent to all parents
- Individual conferences
- Student feedback sheets
- Written responses sent in by parents and catechists

## Questions posed to all

1. What is essential to keep from our present program?
2. What do we need to add to our present program?
3. What do we need to do more of in Family & Teen Faith
4. What ideas would you like us to try?
5. Is there anything we are currently doing that is not working?

## General comments and impressions

- Many thought Family & Teen Faith is moving in the right direction
- Several have noticed a new energy and/or positive spirit in Family & Teen Faith programs
- The respondents overwhelmingly think our Teen Faith program is good to excellent
- The IGNITE program was identified as the program most in need of improvement
- Parents and catechists want to know why our Faith classes are so expensive



## Major Findings

Includes quotes from respondents

1. **Keep the small group format for Teen Faith**

- Keeping classes together with the same catechist over a period of time is very effective
- We need space that is more conducive to small group discussion especially for IGNITE and FLAME.

**2. Community service is an important component of all programs.** Service is both an interactive learning tool and a way to create community among our students.

- Provide more group service projects at all grade levels
- Allow classes to engage in more group service projects during class time
- Keep PADS, The Boulevard and St. Leonard House and look for other sites that might provide other experiences of service
- Do more hands on service with grades 1-6 and less collecting of money or materials

**3 Increase the amount and better integrate scripture taught at every level**

- Use scripture to frame lessons and jump start discussion particularly for IGNITE and FLAME students
- Offer a Bible study track for older students
- IGNITE and FLAME teens should be given Bibles
- Find ways to help students engage with scripture on a personal level
- Our younger students need to become more familiar with biblical stories

**4 Increase the quantity and quality of interactive learning at all levels**

- Faith Festivals and Faith-ins

*The Faith festivals are a must keep.” Do more such activities for grades 1-6 and incorporate the “festival concept” into IGNITE and FLAME.*

*Do a faith-in once a semester for IGNITE and FLAME*

*The retreats are awesome. Retreats deepen connections and are the most effective events we do for FLAME.*

*My daughter really bonded and felt connected to her small group (FLAME1).*

*We need to do retreats for IGNITE*

- The use of music and videos during class is effective – do more
- Investigate other tech apps for classes – i.e. Cahoots
- Use more art in classes at every level

*The Mercy poster night was great.*

*My kids love bringing home examples of their work and it allows parents and kids to talk about what happened in faith class.*

*Having student art work displayed in the Church and around the campus was wonderful. Do more of this.*

- Increase opportunities for prayer in faith classes

*Don't just teach kids about prayer – pray with them.*

- Provide community building activities during class time – i.e. Color Wars. Schedule these nights early in the year rather than later.
- Try using student journaling in classes

- Have the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders help out with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classes
- *'The speakers you brought in were well received. Can we do more of this?'*
- Get new books for Grades 1-6
- Large group was better this year but still needs more work
  - Having the peers lead large group was effective
  - The shorter the better – unless there is a speaker
  - Have a separate large group for IGNITE – doing both IGNITE and FLAME together doesn't work
  - Have fewer large group sessions
  - Have the large group sessions for grades 1-6 more closely connect with the lesson for the day.

*I like the classroom and larger group activities. I think it helps build the children's understanding of community to come out of the classrooms into a large group.*

*Can we have one large group event per year that teens can invite their friends to – i.e. a Christian Rock concert?*

*Check out the Pineapple Express event Willow Creek does for kids. It is very popular.*

## **5 Connecting Catechesis and Worship**

- *Hosting mass was amazing. I can't stop telling anyone who will listen how magnificent Holy Family is about making the church approachable. Wish I could do twice a year.*
- *The 4 pm Mass is fantastic – seeing all those teens ministering is priceless.*
- *I liked having the younger kids' work connected directly to the Sunday liturgy. My kids couldn't wait to go to Mass on those weeks – i.e. their stained glass windows project displayed all through the month of November, bringing up their bullying covenants, blessing the Operation Christmas boxes and having them brought up as part of the gifts, inviting kids to sing at various Masses. The more of this we can do the better.*
- Emphasize the importance of having families attend Mass weekly
- *The 'Teaching Mass' was terrific. Why not do it at all the Masses instead of just the 4 pm Mass?*
- *Why don't grades 5 and 6 go to reconciliation like IGNITE and FLAME?*

## **6 Provide more formation for catechists**

- Get the lesson plans for IGNITE and FLAME out in a more timely fashion.
- Get the catechist website up and running
- Provide more opportunities for catechists to share with each other – short meetings before or after class, create a catechist blog/forum on the catechist website.

*"Catechist orientation was spectacular. Not at all what I expected but for the huge gain. I loved it. I like the continued Catechist sessions offered all year. I regret I couldn't make them. The documentation and lesson plans that support catechists are terrific. Very appropriate ideas. I have heard some push back that the concepts are too complex. EXACTLY! Understanding God takes a lifetime. Bring the tough ideas early.'*

- Offer a workshop for new catechists at the beginning of the year.
- Recruit catechists earlier in the year – maybe over the summer

- Reach out to retired teachers
- Allow people interested in being catechists 'shadow' a catechist at some point during the year.
- Have catechists speak at Mass about why they enjoy this ministry
- Let people know how much help catechists receive, i.e. lesson plans, ideas for games, crafts, prayer

## 7 Get Parents more involved

- Offer speakers for parents during Faith Classes – this was done in the past and seemed to be successful.
- Send out an email to parents prior to class letting parents know what will be covered in class. That way parents can talk to their kids about what they are learning

*'My son's catechist sent us an email every week telling us what they covered in class. We found that very helpful. I know it is a lot of work but if every catechist could do that it would be great.'*

- Have a webpage just for parents
- Send more frequent reminders about things
- *I love the newsletter – keep that going*
- *I like the extra sacrament prep sessions. They are wonderful and always so age appropriate."*

*Dr. Peg's talks at the parent sacrament meeting were great!*

- Gather families for more 'fun social' events
- *'The Parent Advisory Board was a good idea, why hasn't it started?'*
- Invite parents to volunteer in their child's classroom once a year

## 8 Suggestions made that generated mixed reaction

- Schedule for classes – options for days and times

*The length of Sunday night--too long. An hour and a half in class is not necessary.*

*Heard you have teen faith Sunday nights!!!! That will never work for us we have Sunday dinner with family!*

*Have the Sunday evening session moved to 6 - 8pm.*

*I like the time length and number of nights there are faith. Just the right amount.*

*We love the Sunday schedule; weekdays are just too busy for us*

- Age for Confirmation

*Keep Confirmation @ Sophomore. Keep Volunteer Requirement.*

*Move Confirmation to 8<sup>th</sup> grade*

*Reduce the number of meeting days. Reduce the Flame service hour requirement from 20 back to 10.*

- Meeting space for classes

*'Allow faith classes to meet at catechist's homes. We met several times for extra events and the teens told us they liked to have class at the homes sometimes vs. the classrooms.'*

- Curriculum and Pedagogy

*Too much religious Ed, not enough engagement in how kids can use spirituality to live their lives connected to God doing his work and enjoying his grace.*

*FLAME classes are too topical; not much difference between what the kids are talking about in health classes at school. Need a way to tie their faith to these issues - more talk about how God works in their daily lives, ways*

*Add speakers on various religious/current church topics*

- Sacramental Preparation

*"The sessions for the first communion families were awesome. I learned so much as a parent and enjoyed having one on one time with my daughter. Thank you."*

*The Sacramental Meetings outside of class - should be included as part of regular session.*

9 **Proposed Action Steps** – need to be prioritized

- Present finding of Listening Sessions to
  - Pastor and his leadership team
  - Parish Pastoral Council
  - Parents, Catechists
- Spend the summer reviewing and updating all lesson plans so they are ready to go for Fall 2016
- Review text book options for Grades 1-6 make a decision about curriculum by 6/15. This must include costs associated with changing texts.
- Plan one more Faith Festival for 1-6 and one for IGNITE and FLAME on service
- Convene the Parent Advisory Group and have their first task be to help draft 3 and 5 year plans for Family & Teen Faith
- Research and schedule more service opportunities for all grade levels
- Incorporate more scripture in all lesson plans
- Research the cost of providing IGNITE students with Bibles
- Get the catechist website up and running for Fall 2016
- Investigate how to create a catechist blog
- Work on creating a parent website/page
- Look at programming for parents
- Schedule two community building session per year for IGNITE and FLAME
- Work with the Liturgical Life Office to create a more cohesive connection with catechesis
- Prepare a financial report for parents so that they understand the cost structure of Family & Teen Faith
- Research ways to increase our technological footprint in Faith classes