

RCL Benziger Family Life Whole Family Gathering

1 God's Gift of Family

This session, provides the first of five two-hour sessions introducing each unit of the *RCL Benziger Family Life* curriculum. It allows program teachers/catechists and the participant families the opportunity to reflect on God's Gift of Family through two questions: What does it mean to be a Catholic Family? How do we show others that we are a Catholic family? All children of school age and their parents should attend the session.

Workshop Materials Checklist

- ▶ Overview DVD for *RCL Benziger Family Life*
- ▶ Projection equipment for viewing DVD
- ▶ Nametags
- ▶ Student books of appropriate grade level for each child
- ▶ Accompanying *Family Connection* booklets for parents
- ▶ Copies of prayer service for each participant
- ▶ Copies of the Family Covenant for each family
- ▶ Writing pens/pencils and paper for each participant
- ▶ Musician to assist with prayer service (optional)
- ▶ Display of entire Family Life curriculum

Workshop Environment

- ▶ **Prayer Center.** Place a prayer center at the heart of the workshop space that reflects the liturgical season. Be sure that the prayer table includes a large crucifix, a candle, and a Bible, which will be enthroned in the prayer center during the opening prayer service. (See prayer service master.)
- ▶ **Seating Arrangement.** Round tables and chairs to seat 8-10 is the ideal arrangement. Seasonal centerpiece decorations, or simply a candle, open Bible, and a few seasonal leaves or flowers will communicate a sense of welcome. Families should sit together, preferably with at least two families at each table. Catechists may be seated randomly among the family tables, and serve as table facilitators.
- ▶ **Comfort.** Be sure the meeting room can be sufficiently darkened for optimal DVD viewing.
- ▶ **Hospitality.** Provide an attractively-arranged hospitality table.



SESSION PLAN

Introduction—30 minutes

- ▶ **Welcome.** Greet family members as they arrive. Give them nametags and the appropriate student texts and Family Connection booklets.
- ▶ **Pray.** Because of the centrality that the word of God should have in each Catholic home, begin with a service of enthronement of the Scriptures, using the attached prayer service master. After the service, suggest that families place a family Bible in a place of honor in their homes, just as you have in the prayer center.
- ▶ **Break the ice.** Greet the participants. Invite them to write on the corners of their nametags two talents or gifts they have, and two things that they like to do. Ask each person to share their nametag facts with someone at their table or at a nearby table whom they do not know well. If you have a large group present, simply ask six or eight volunteers (children as well as parents) to share what they learned about someone else with the entire group. Conclude by reminding them Catholic families are made up of the unique gifts of each member. Remind them that God has made each family special, and that God loves all families. In a Catholic family all are respectful of one another's unique gifts and preferences.

Part I: Orientation to RCL Benziger Family Life –30 minutes

- ▶ **Introduction.** Explain that this session will allow each family to reflect on what it means to be a strong Catholic family that is a true household of faith. Explain in your own words the two-fold goal of the RCL Benziger Family Life curriculum:
 - ★ To provide a moral catechesis reflecting the Church's teaching about Catholic family living;
 - ★ To build strong families who will live their Catholic faith daily with one another and in their communities.
 - ★ Remind them that RCL Benziger *Family Life* also reinforces important concepts for child safety. Children will learn how to keep themselves safe and parents will learn how to protect their children from harm.
 - ★ Show the DVD. Introduce the DVD introduction to the Family Life curriculum. Ask the parents to jot down any questions they may have as they view the video. At the conclusion of the DVD, respond to any questions they may have.
 - ★ Browsing time. Invite the parents and children to look through the printed materials together. Catechists can use this time to familiarize themselves with their catechist guides.

BREAK – 15 minutes

Part 2 What Is a Catholic Family?

30 minutes

Tell the participants that the rest of the session will be an opportunity to explore together the question: What does it mean to be a Catholic family? Use the following steps to facilitate this part of the session.

- ▶ Ask the family groups to make a simple drawing showing all their family members who would sit around the table at a special family meal.
- ▶ Discuss the following two questions together:
 - ★ Are all members of our family Catholic? If not, what gifts do the non-Catholic members bring to our family?
 - ★ Do we have any special religious traditions or celebrations, e.g., an Advent wreath, saying grace at meals, attending Mass on Sunday, special devotions?
 - ★ What values do we practice that show others we are a Catholic family?
- ▶ Ask each family to share their responses with another family seated nearby.
- ▶ Ask each family to practice the virtues highlighted in Chapters 1 and 2. A good strategy would be to focus on a family “virtue of the week.”
- ▶ Ask them to commit themselves to spend one-half hour with each of their children in the month ahead to go over the contents of the two chapters in the unit. Suggest that then they gather as a family and share what they have all learned about God’s gift of family.
- ▶ Ask parents to read the first unit of the Family Connection magazine(s). Encourage them to discuss the age-appropriate child safety information with their child(ren) that is found in the magazine(s).
- ▶ Distribute the Family Covenant sheets that express the commitments described above. Invite each member of the family to sign the covenant and take it home to post where it can be seen by all, perhaps on the refrigerator.
- ▶ Invite each table to join hands and pray the Our Father with you as a closing prayer for the session.

Part 3: Conclusion—15 minutes

Remind the families that the first unit of Family Life is entitled God’s Gift of Family. You are inviting each family to make the following commitments between now and the next whole family session to be held

on _____.

Fellowship

Invite families to remain for a time to enjoy refreshments and conversation with one another.

