

PROJECT NAZARETH

FAITH BEGINS AT HOME



Parent Guide

Welcome to PROJECT NAZARETH. We're so glad you've chosen our resources to help you complete the promise made at your child's baptism of **training him (or her) in the practice of the faith**. This guide is a resource to help you understand the program and how to use it. As you begin PROJECT NAZARETH, you may find yourself returning to this guide frequently. Don't worry! In time, you will become more comfortable with the program and will find yourself referring to this guide less often.

“Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children in the faith, prayer, and all the virtues. They have the duty to provide as far as possible for the physical and spiritual needs of their children.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church 2252

A DIFFERENT KIND OF FAITH FORMATION

PROJECT NAZARETH is designed to make this responsibility much easier for parents — no matter where you are on your spiritual journey. Cradle Catholics and converts alike will find the knowledge, skills, and activities you need to instruct your children in the faith while deepening your own faith. Many traditional faith formation programs are based primarily around classroom instruction with a lack of emphasis on practice within the home. Parents choose this option for a number of reasons: convenience; fear that they are not properly equipped to teach their children themselves; because it's the way they were taught themselves; or other reasons. Unfortunately, moving faith formation from the home to the parish robs both you and your child of the opportunity to explore your faith together. PROJECT NAZARETH aims to turn this dynamic on its head, moving the primary location of faith formation back into your home — with plenty of support of course.

In addition to allowing parents a more active role in their child's faith formation, this also provides children with the valuable opportunity of seeing and hearing you (parents) engage with your faith through prayer, study, generosity, and evangelization. This modeling is critical for children as they learn their values from the behavior of trusted adults.

Though PROJECT NAZARETH moves much of the faith formation process into the home, it is in no way intended to be a substitute for parish involvement. Parishes provide us with regular reception of the sacraments, connection to a larger community, opportunities to serve in various ministries, and opportunities to engage with the larger Church and live our faith. Faith starts at home, but our parishes connect us to our larger Catholic family. For this reason, PROJECT NAZARETH does not provide sacramental preparation.

WEEKLY TOOLKIT

ACTIVITIES
PRAYERS
READINGS
QUESTIONS

PROJECT NAZARETH is designed to preview the readings we will hear at Mass each week and so prepare us to appreciate them more fully during Mass. Each week, you will receive a Weekly Toolkit filled with activities, prayers, readings, and questions to ponder with your children. You can use this Toolkit to help structure your exploration of the week's theme with your child. These aren't traditional lesson plans that you run through in an hour. The goal is to intersperse these activities throughout your week, turning every moment at home into an opportunity to grow in faith and love with your child. The activities are designed to be flexible, trusting you to know your children well enough to adapt them as you see fit. You can complete the weekly lesson in any order, ideally a little bit each day. This way, faith becomes integrated into your child's daily life, instead of being a one-hour-per-week endeavor.

TWO SERIES: SACRED MYSTERIES AND THE GOOD NEWS

At this initial stage, PROJECT NAZARETH is divided into two series. The first, *Sacred Mysteries*, invites children into further exploration of their faith and is designed to mirror the readings that we hear at Mass each week. The second series, *The Good News*, is designed to introduce children to the most fundamental aspects of our faith. We'll explore questions about who God is, what our relationship is to Him, why we need Him, what He's done for us, and how we should respond.

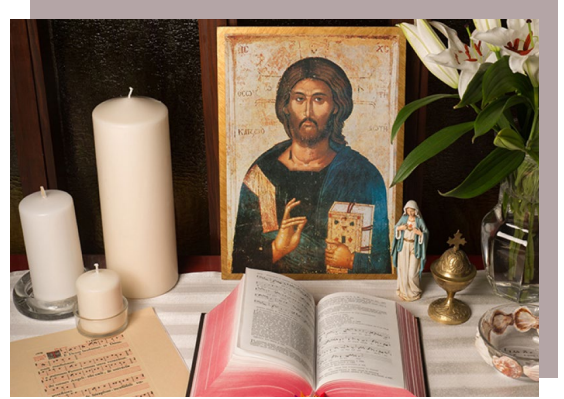
How to use PROJECT NAZARETH:

- You'll receive a Weekly Toolkit with activities, prayers, readings, and questions to ponder with your children.
- Use this Toolkit to help structure your exploration of the week's theme with your child.
- Intersperse these activities throughout your week, turning every moment at home into an opportunity to grow in faith and love with your child.
- The activities are designed to be flexible. You know your children, so adapt them as you see fit.

SETTING THE SPACE

Even though faith formation and instruction can take place at any moment, it may be helpful to set the scene before doing the activities in your Weekly Toolkit. Consider setting aside a special place in your house to set up an altar and quiet prayer corner. This altar can be decorated each week by you and your child(ren) to reflect that week's theme.

For example, if a week focuses on the call of the first apostles and being “fishers of men” you could decorate the altar with images and symbols of fish. Moving into this sacred space within your home will also help younger children to transition to the right frame of mind to think about some of the topics you will be discussing.



WEEKLY TOOLKIT SECTIONS

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

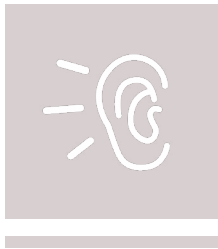
Each Weekly Toolkit will begin with the teaching objectives for the week. These objectives are the fundamental truths or “morals” of the week. Each teaching objective will also include a scriptural citation and/or a citation from the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC). You should read these passages to familiarize yourself with them, and, if you decide that it is appropriate, share them directly with your child.



PONDER

The PONDER section of each Weekly Toolkit will provide you with a list of questions you can use to engage your child in thinking about that week's subject. These questions aren't a quiz or a test — some of them won't even have a “right” answer! Instead, these questions are designed to get you and your child thinking about the week's lessons. They can serve as jumping off points for deeper conversations. You can ask all the questions at once or spread them out over the week. If you do choose to ask the questions all at once, consider asking them a second time later in the week to see if your child's thinking has changed at all. It probably has.

You may find it helpful to ask some of these questions after completing a LISTEN activity, or perhaps you may think it makes a good introduction to the LISTEN activity. The questions can also be sprinkled in during the PRAY and ACT activities as you see fit. The resource guide gives you the ingredients, but it's up to you to arrange them in a way that makes sense for your family.



LISTEN

Scripture is one of the primary sources of Catholic teaching. Each week we will encourage your family to break open sacred scripture by providing a couple of passages that illustrate the week's teaching objectives. You can use the scripture to complete a modified *Lectio Divina* that is suitable for your children.

The Basics of *Lectio Divina*:

- Start by quieting the mood. Consider dimming the lights a bit to make the space prayerful and more suitable for reflection.
- Next, read the scripture slowly and clearly.
- Once you've finished, wait a few moments for your child to think, then read it again.
- Repeat this process a third time.
- Once you've read the scripture three times, ask your child some questions to help them process.

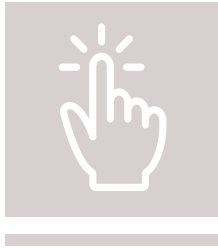
Examples of good processing questions include: What was your favorite part? How did this make you feel? What do you think God is trying to teach us? These questions should help spark a conversation about the text where you and your child can share your ideas about what you read and heard. If time and attention span allow for it, these processing questions can provide a nice transition into the PONDER section for the week. Consider going back to some of the PONDER questions if your child's responses head in the direction of any of the week's teaching objectives.



PRAY

The Weekly Toolkit will also include instructions on how to deepen your child's prayer life. Consider praying the suggested prayers before meals. You may also want to offer the prayers in the morning or evening. These aren't simply exercises in memorization. Take time to think about what the prayers mean and discuss this with your children. Begin and end your activities for the week with the prayers of the week if possible.

Prayer is listening to God, so try to help your child to listen. Incorporate times of silence, language, and controlled movement such as hand signs. These will help your child to fully engage. With young children, spontaneous prayers of gratitude (thank you God for Mommy, Daddy, and Fido) are appropriate while older children will likely be more interested in intercessory prayers (please help me to focus while I study). For more helpful tips as well as full text of a number of traditional prayers along with specific instructions on how to pray them, you can refer to the Prayer Guide.



ACT

Children often learn by doing. Each Weekly Toolkit will include some activities designed to deepen your child's understanding of the week's learning objectives. You can do all of the activities listed, or just one. Begin and end the activities with prayer, and consider asking some of the PONDER questions during the activities as well.

OTHER RESOURCES

Some of the activities may even inspire some curiosity in you as well! If that happens, we encourage you to look at the GOING DEEPER section. This section is not required reading, but they are great resources to help parents dive deeper into the topics. Whenever possible, we'll provide links to the resources, but some resources may not be available for free online. You can also visit www.ProjectNazareth.org for more information on a number of topics and additional resources.