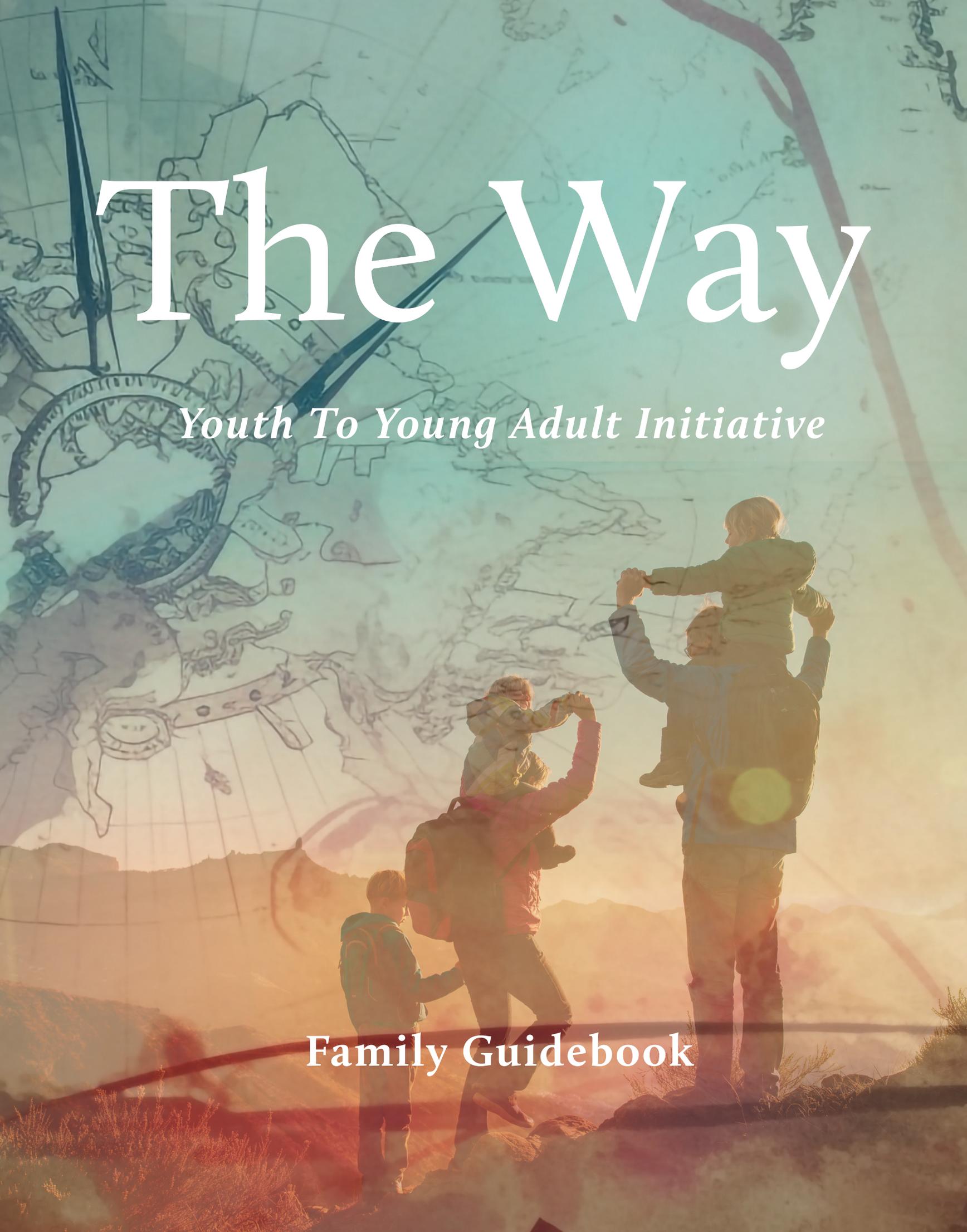


The Way

Youth To Young Adult Initiative

Family Guidebook





Office of the Bishop

Strengthening Faith in a Challenging World

Pastoral Letter Promulgating *The Way: Youth to Young Adult Initiative*

“For the one who has, more will be given, and from one who has not, even what little he has will be taken away.” -Mark 4:25

This statement of Jesus has particular relevance to the gifts that come from *God—faith and grace* among them. Much like a second language or friendship, if certain gifts are not reinforced, used, or increased, they are eventually lost. For example, one can attend a language immersion school and learn a new language. However, it will be lost over time if that language is not used and practiced. Likewise, if we do not connect with our friends regularly, we drift apart, and the friendship evaporates. Religious faith is similar.

A Concerning Trend

It is no secret that religious belief across America has declined for over 50 years but has decreased at an unprecedented rate over the past two decades. According to a 2020 Pew Research Center study, 64% of Americans identified as Christian in 2020, down from 90% in the early 1990s. This was the first time a poll found less than half of Americans belonging to a church. In recent years, the disturbing trend of people who leave religion completely and claim no religious affiliation has skyrocketed from 16% in 2007 to 30% in 2020.

Our diocese is no exception. In 1976, over 87,000 people participated in Mass each week. As of 2018 that number has dropped to below 45,000. But that’s not the whole story. Based on the population growth rate in our diocese since 1976, we should see well over 110,000 Catholics at Mass each week. So, in reality, we are ***missing almost 69,000 Catholics.***

There is a similar decline in reception of the sacraments. In the 2001/2002 school year, almost 2,000 children were baptized in our diocese. Of those, only a little over 1,000 went on to be confirmed as teens. This downward trend continues in subsequent years. That means almost half of our baptized children don’t receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in their youth. This calls for a remedy.

The Challenge

We are at a critical moment. It is time to reevaluate our approach to formation and disciple-making within Catholic institutions and families. Our mission is to ensure that our youth become devoted disciples of Jesus Christ and continue the journey toward heaven in their adult lives. I am concerned that many do not see how serious the challenge has become. The influence of secular culture presents unique challenges to families, especially in the critical years in which parents hand on the Faith to the next generation so that this precious gift from God is not abandoned.

The Vision and Goals

The impetus for what I announce and promulgate with this letter arose from the *Visioning Process* we embarked on over five years ago, which yielded our guiding vision, *One Family: Restored in Christ, Equipped for Mission*. Under the priority, *Growing God's Family*, is the concrete goal to “Craft a Comprehensive Youth to Young Adult Initiative by November 2022.” While the unexpected challenges of COVID delayed this goal, I am happy to share the outline of where we will be going in the coming years.

The Irreplaceable Role of Parents

Challenges are not met so much with programs but with people. The transmission of faith is accomplished from person to person. This personal aspect is especially relevant in the context of family, which is the *domestic church* in our Catholic understanding. The family forms the most basic cell of the Church. As a small society of faith and love, every family member has rights and duties. The pinnacle of Christian parents' responsibilities, which they promise to fulfill on the day of their child's baptism, is to educate and raise their child in the Catholic Faith. Indeed, one of the Catholic Church's foundational principles for religious education is that parents hold the primary place as educators of their children. All the other resources the larger Church community provides—the parish school, religious education programs, and youth ministry—are meant to supplement what happens in the child's family, not replace it.

Empowering Parents

With the irreplaceable role of parents in mind, this new initiative supports more direct involvement of parents in their children's ongoing Christian education and spiritual growth. The hope and expectation are for this to contribute to the ongoing spiritual development of parents as well. God delights when the family grows together, each member contributing to the holiness of the other. Research shows that children who grow up discussing faith within the family are more likely to practice their religion ten years after they leave home. More than any other factor— a family that regularly discusses faith has the most influence on children continuing to practice their faith.

The Importance of Encounter and Memory

Knowledge is essential in the life and growth of every disciple. Jesus promised, “*You will know the truth and the truth will set you free*” (John 8:32) and “*Now this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ*” (John 17:4). But the knowledge of which Jesus speaks is more than mere intellectual knowledge.

Christianity is not a philosophy or a set of beliefs, but encountering a person, the divine Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, who took flesh and became man. Jesus reveals God to us, and he reveals to us what it means to be fully human. We follow a real person and truly share his very life. We can say, “Jesus Christ is not just an important part of my life; he is my life.”

Being a disciple of Jesus is more than knowing things about him—it is knowing him and living in him. St. Paul describes this beautifully, “*It is now no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*” (Gal 2:20). We don't think our way into heaven. We have a share in heaven if we have Christ fully alive in us: “*I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing*” (John 15:5).

All this is to say that religious education must be more than an academic exercise in which we complete a set of classes. We need to know teachings and understand our faith, but we also need to know Jesus Christ. This

“knowledge” comes from encountering Jesus and his authentic love for us personally.

We must provide for and encourage opportunities during childhood for these encounters and the powerful memories that accompany them. The Holy Spirit accomplishes these encounters when we make room for them and seek them. Through these encounters, our children enter into friendship with Jesus and fall in love with him.

Remembering and Building Memories

Jesus urged his disciples to “remember” events and the things he told them, such as at the Last Supper when he gave them the gift of the Eucharist. We often recall where we were and what we were doing when something profoundly important happened. God uses our memories of him and his grace to fortify our lives in faith as we grow and age. This initiative creates moments to allow God to bestow good experiences and memories on our children, which they can carry through life.

Why this is Important: The Salvation of our Children

We read in the Bible the good news of salvation: “*You can depend on this as worthy of full acceptance: that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners*” (1 Tim 1:15). The Scriptures elaborate in different places on how Christ accomplishes our salvation: through faith (Jn 3:15; Rm 10:9-11), through baptism (Jn 3:5; 1 Pt 3:21; Tit 3:5), through good works of love (Mt 7:21; Mt 25: 31-46; Jn 14:21; Phil 2:12-13); through frequent reception of the Eucharist (Jn 6: 53-58); by avoiding serious sin and by extension, going to regular confession (1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5: 19-21; Eph 5: 3-6; Rev 22: 12-16; Mt 25: 41-46; Jn 5: 28-29); and through final perseverance as a Christian to the end of one’s life (Mt 24: 13-14; Phil 2: 12; 2 Tim 2: 11-12; Heb 6: 4-6).

The essential thing in life, the ultimate goal, is life with God and those who love him in heaven. Not meeting this goal is an utter, eternal tragedy. God is mercy, but it is presumptive to conclude that God will save us without our consent and cooperation. God’s love is so great that he allows us to choose him (and heaven) or something less. The parable of the Prodigal Son in Saint Luke’s Gospel (Lk 15:11-32) illustrates this perfect balance of freedom and mercy. The prodigal son was allowed to leave, make a disaster of his life, and choose sin and the suffering that always goes with it. It was only after turning back (repentance) that he encountered the salvation of the Father’s mercy. So it is with each person. God chooses us, and God lets us choose—love requires both.

The years of youth are a precious time to introduce our children to the God who loves them and help them respond in freedom and faith. By proposing the Catholic Faith in a compelling way, as a choice that will enrich and deepen their lives, we nurture a deep and abiding relationship of faith, hope, and love that will carry them through life with all its storms and winding paths. Ideally, this is done in both the family context and parish/school religious education.

Enhancing What We Already Have

The following plan does not discard what families and parishes are already doing. The dedication and commitment of many parents and teachers in forming our children in the faith is praiseworthy.

We also see the fruit of this work in so many of our children as they grow into maturity and live as disciples of Jesus. Rather, this plan seeks to provide a clearer, more integrated path that uses what is in place but enhances and provides more order so that parents can be more engaged in the religious life and education of their children.

What follows is not complex. For any plan to be effective, it must be understandable, achievable, and have

adequate resources. I believe we have those ingredients in place. However, I am desirous of providing more resources so that we are as effective as possible in forming our children for this life and for the life to come. For example, I plan to gradually increase our capability for families and children to make spiritual retreats. Additionally, we are developing parent resources for intentional conversations around integrating faith and daily life.

Future Steps and Gratitude

I wish to thank you, parents, for your generosity in allowing God to gift you with a child and for asking God to bestow the supernatural life of grace upon your child at baptism. I hope this new plan will help you follow through on the promises you made at your child's baptism to help your child grow that gift of faith to full maturity and to "keep the flame of faith alive" in your child's heart. Your Church is committed to helping you with this critical responsibility.

I also thank our priests, deacons, and many lay employees and volunteers who are so generous in teaching, serving, and providing a witness with their lives so that our youth can know Jesus, love Jesus, and serve and live for Jesus. Ultimately, all we do in the Church is for that goal.

Gratefully Yours in Christ,

+ James V. Johnston, Jr.

James V. Johnston, Jr.

Bishop of Kansas City-St. Joseph

+ All Saints -November 1, 2023

Main Features of The Way: Youth to Young Adult Initiative

- The time for ordinary reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation will be 6th grade.
- A comprehensive approach will integrate existing formation for the Sacraments of Initiation and the Sacrament of Penance with the role of parents.
- Retreats and other faith experiences will emphasize encounter with God and the value of memory.
- Support will be provided to equip parents for fruitful conversations with their children.
- Guidance will be given to parents regarding ages and stages of development in faith and discipleship.
- Intentional efforts to bridge gaps between stages of development and stages of life will assist youth in navigating their way towards adult faith.
- Formation at key moments will support youth as they approach, discern, and commit to their vocation.

El Camino: The Way

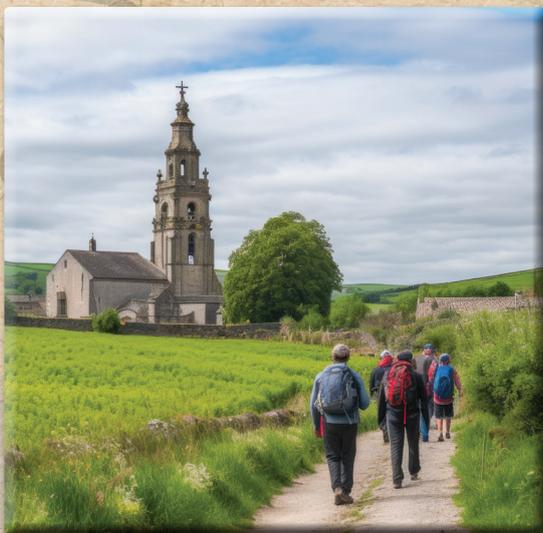
Navigating the Journey to Adult Faith: A Trail Map

A Challenging Journey

Have you ever done something physically challenging, like hiking a steep mountain trail or running a long-distance race? Inevitably, fatigue sets in. As your legs and feet begin to ache, you find yourself longing for the end.

However, that feeling is worse if you don't know where you are on the journey. How far is it to the finish? You might wonder if you have enough strength to reach the end. You question whether you should slow down and rest, stop and give up, or keep going.

Having a map to know where you are, what obstacles you might face, and a plan for how long the trip should take is an immense help. It's even better if there are signposts along the way to guide you.



Finding Inspiration on “The Way”

A religious pilgrimage is like this, too. A pilgrimage is like a long retreat in which a journey is taken to a spiritually significant place. There is fellowship with others undertaking the same journey and abundant time for reflection. Often, the trip is difficult and requires sacrifices. Ultimately, one discovers oneself and even learns new insights about God. Pilgrimages are about discovering meaning and direction in one's life as a Catholic.

This was captured in the 2010 film “The Way,” where the actor Martin Sheen hiked the 500-mile Camino de Santiago pilgrimage trail from Pamplona to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. He undertook this journey as a last-minute tribute to his son, who died on the same pilgrimage earlier that year. He found himself woefully unprepared, with blisters on his feet, bone-deep fatigue, no idea what he was doing, and serious doubt about his ability to finish. Fortunately, he fell in with a more experienced group that gave him help and encouragement.

Along the way the towns and the trail markers featured heavily in the narrative because they served as crucial indicators of progress.





The Youth to Young Adult Initiative

El Camino (The Way) was inspiration for the Youth to Young Adult Initiative. Just as signposts or markers on the Camino indicate progress, children also experience specific milestones as they journey toward adulthood, both in their development and spirituality. A trail map has been created to guide this journey, assisting parents, religious educators, and teachers to understand what children should learn and when to more closely unite their efforts.

The Early Christians were known as people of *The Way* (cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9; 22:4; 24:14). This initiative will provide resources to help parents guide their children along *The Way*. **The end goal of the journey is for children to become mature disciples of Jesus Christ, to find their vocation, and commit to it wholeheartedly.** Ultimately, we know that it is Jesus himself who is the Way: *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me”* (John 14:6).

A Transformative Journey of Faith

Undertaking a challenging journey, such as the Camino de Santiago, often leads to transformation. As one’s limits are pushed, insights into one’s true self are gained—bravery, willingness to endure pain, and the depth of one’s inner strength. In the film, “The Way,” each character began with goals for personal change, often hindered by their histories and their faults. As the characters traveled, they came to a profound understanding of these aspirations and faults. And while they didn’t always achieve everything they set out to accomplish, they found peace discovering their identity.

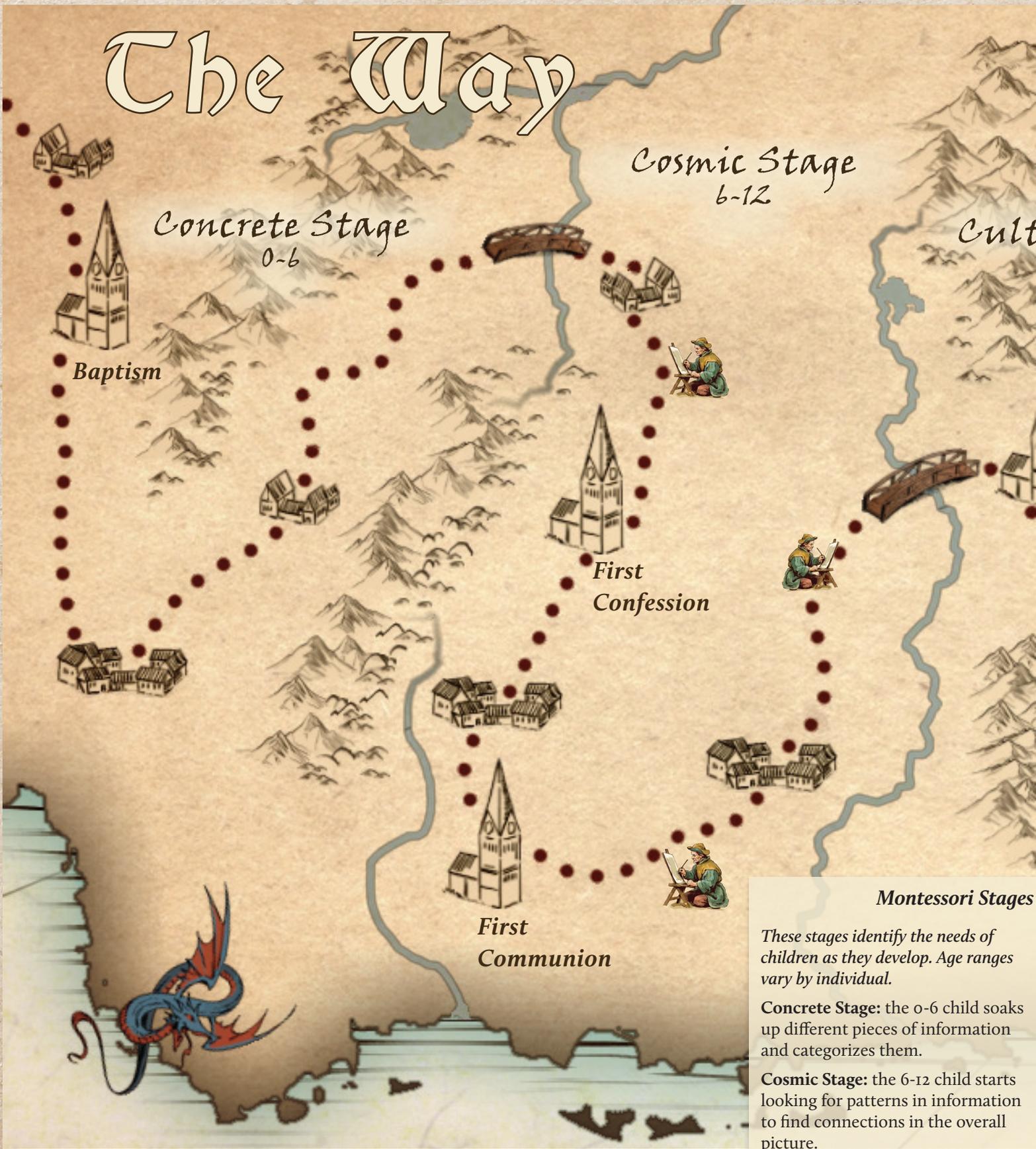
Embracing the Journey of Faith Formation

Your child’s religious education should be a similar transformative journey. Faith formation goes beyond mere knowledge; it leads to a relationship with God through Jesus Christ – the ultimate goal that brings joy in this life and the next.

Jesus is the answer to all the questions of human experience. He reveals our identity, heals our brokenness, and points us to our destination, heaven.



The Way



Montessori Stages

These stages identify the needs of children as they develop. Age ranges vary by individual.

Concrete Stage: the 0-6 child soaks up different pieces of information and categorizes them.

Cosmic Stage: the 6-12 child starts looking for patterns in information to find connections in the overall picture.

Map Legend



Churches represent Sacraments of Initiation {Baptism, First Confession (7), First Holy Communion (7), Confirmation (11)} then Sacraments of Self-Gift {Holy Orders, Marriage} and (though not a sacrament) the vocation to consecrated religious life.



Bridges represent supportive individuals and initiatives assisting families to progress to the next stage of formation together. Without a bridge in place family members may get stuck, unable to cross each river or even lose their way on the path.





of Development

Cultural Stage: The 12-18 child discovers who he is in relation to those beyond family to see how he fits into the world.

Constructive Stage: The full development of a human being occurs around the age of 24. The person integrates all that went before and dedicates herself to her life's mission.

The painter with canvas on easel marks moments of intentional memory-making and encounter with God. There are several retreat opportunities that will be available at multiple stages for this purpose.



The Inns are moments around the family table and include formation elements and intentional conversations to help parents and other educators guide youth along *The Way*.



The Cathedral represents the end of the trail, which is Heaven.

Expanded Map Legend



Christian Life is a Pilgrimage to Heaven

This is a continuation of the Map Legend from the previous pages. This trail map of *The Way* shows the path for youth from birth through the commitment to vocation.

The Way: Youth to Young Adult Initiative supplements school and parish curricula, adding yearly themes and diocesan programs and retreats.

1st grade – Good Shepherd Year

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He seeks the lost even to the point of outrageous danger (to himself) and even to the point of his own death. He meets us and cares for us and wants everybody to be part of this relationship.



Discussion guides are provided for remote preparation for First Confession.

2nd grade – Holy Eucharist Year



This is the year when children prepare to receive their First Confession and First Holy Communion. Focus is on the value and importance of Sunday Mass presence as a family, celebrating Sunday well as a day of rest and connection with God.

Parents are invited to experience a personal encounter with God through an **Invitation Retreat**.

3rd grade—Holy Family Year

This year follows reception of First Holy Communion to deepen the family experience of this grace. The family is invited to follow the model of the Holy Family and to create a plan for this.



“Do-it-yourself Family Retreat”: This family retreat can be done at home, or in parish groups using provided materials. The family will learn about their unique mission to discern each member’s role. This retreat includes preparation for a simple consecration of their home to the Holy Family.

4th grade— Ten Commandments Year



This year will facilitate further reflection on how the Ten Commandments are God’s recipe for a wonderful life of freedom. Parishes and schools will have several ways to equip parents for conversations about living the Ten Commandments.

5th grade— Call to Holiness Year



“Called to Greatness” Retreat on the call to holiness will be offered by diocesan leaders at a retreat center (for boys and girls separately).

Making God’s Story Your Story is a resource for parents to guide children to read/pray with the Bible.

6th grade—Holy Spirit Year



This will be the ordinary year for reception of Confirmation.

Parishes will offer a retreat for candidates, sponsors, and parents focused on the meaning of the sacrament, and the call to live as missionary disciples and witnesses of the Risen Christ.

7th—8th grade Works of Charity and Mercy Years



Support will be provided for parents to continue having fruitful faith conversations at home. This will also include family “Action Guides.” Focus will be establishing spiritual family life in addition to attending Mass through family service projects and faith-sharing resources for parents to help develop the “language of faith” in the home.

Discussion guides will be provided on a variety of topics including: Family Mission and Rule of Life, Making Good Decisions, Prayer, Technology and Media Use, Pornography Exposure, Sexuality and Development, Friendships, Vocation, Discipleship, Sharing Faith, etc.



Family Action guides: for service, charitable works, evangelization, prayer & fasting/sacrifice, pilgrimage.

9th –10th Grade – Virtue and Morality Years

These years will emphasize the role of parents as mentors who continue to support the development of their child’s moral life and character. “The goal of the virtuous life is to become like God” - St. Gregory.



Discussion guides on a variety of topics throughout the High School years will include: Prayer and the Virtuous Life, Making Good Decisions, Technology and Media Use, Sexuality and Chastity, Friendships, Vocation, Adult Decision Making, Discipleship, Sharing Faith, etc.

9th –12th Grade – College Campus Visits

We will offer organized college visits with Newman Center Campus Ministries for students and parents to help them make an informed decision about the importance of a Catholic community when applying to and choosing a college.



Discussion guides will include discernment about vocation, professions, discovering God’s will, etc.

11th – 12th Grade – Discover Your Vocation Years



To prepare youth to venture out into the world, parents will seek to strengthen family sacramental life and day-to-day disciplines in prayer and reading of scripture.

11th grade – Vocation Discernment Retreat



The diocese will offer the “Discovering God’s Hope For Me” Retreat, an experience of vocation discernment and adult Catholic life. This retreat will provide an opportunity for youth to learn about various vocations (priesthood, religious life, marriage, etc.), discernment (learning God’s will through prayer and decision making), and the process to pursue each vocation.

Vision for Parents

The Way: Youth to Young Adult Initiative provides guidance and resources to assist parents and guardians in guiding their children from baptism through adult faith and commitment to their vocation. This is a vision for parents, not a curriculum for parishes and Catholic schools. *The Way* primarily addresses parents because they are the most vital disciple-makers in their children's lives. Educators, priests, parish staff, youth ministers, catechists, and others will provide essential support to parents in youth formation. Resources from this initiative will provide clear formation objectives based on the stages of discipleship and developmental stages (shown on the map on pages 8-9). We will develop resources guiding parents in how to help children grow in faith and discipleship at different stages of the journey.



We have illustrated this as a trail map for an extended pilgrimage that lasts from infancy to young adulthood and lays the foundation for a lifetime of belief and practice. Like a pilgrimage, it has times for retreat and reflection, fellowship, formation, and perhaps a few moments of extra effort. Ultimately, it aims to help families and youth discover the direction of their lives as Catholics.



Recognizing the Changing Landscape of Faith Formation

We are challenging the entire Church to better foster discipleship throughout the stages of our children's spiritual development. While our faith formation efforts effectively communicate the content of the faith, the changing culture presents new challenges. Some formation approaches are not as effective as they once were. The aim is to tie what remains effective with this renewed approach. This will create a clear, methodical, consistent vision toward a single goal—forming intentional disciples of Jesus Christ.

Understanding the Influence of Parents

This initiative is, first and foremost, addressed to parents. Sociologist and researcher Christian Smith's latest work, *Handing Down the Faith: How Parents Pass Their Religion on to the Next Generation*, heavily informed the methodology of this initiative. His work to understand the religious lives of American teens and young adults began in 2005 with the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR). Over the last 18 years, Smith's continued study of the original research group revealed the key factors to forming faith that endures. His conclusion? Parents are the deciding factor.

All research in the United States today shows clearly that parents are by far the most important factor influencing their children's religion, not only as youth but also after they leave home. Not clergy, religious schools, youth ministers, neighborhoods, Sunday school, mission trips, service projects, summer camps, peers, or the media. Parents. (Smith, *Handing Down the Faith*, page 69)

Parents define for their children the role that religious faith and practice ought to play in life, whether important or not, which most children roughly adopt. Parents set a 'glass ceiling' of religious commitment above which their children rarely rise. Parental religious investment and involvement is in almost all cases the necessary and even sometimes sufficient condition for children's religious investment and involvement. (Smith, page 69)



The fact that parents hold so much influence in the lives of American teens surprised Smith in 2005. He assumed Hollywood, the wizards of marketing on Madison Avenue, or even peers would hold primary influence. You may be thinking the same thing. However, Smith's research argues that this is not true, and after 18 years of follow-up research, his original conclusions are confirmed. You are your child's primary source of guidance for life's toughest decisions.

That is not to say that parishes, Catholic schools, and solid preaching from clergy are irrelevant and no longer needed. Rather, it signals that parents must be essential resources and intimate partners with parish and Catholic school faith formation. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 2226, states, "Education in the faith by the parents should begin in the child's earliest years...Family catechesis

precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith." A true partnership between parents and parish/Catholic schools is even more crucial today. That is why this initiative is addressed to parents and why a more intentional family involvement will be integral to faith formation in this new vision.

Adapting to a Changing Culture

In *Handing Down the Faith*, Smith lays out several best practices for parenting styles that lead to children practicing the faith ten years after leaving home. Notably, he finds that parents who have high standards and demand the best from their children but are also highly communicative and warm have the best results. However, the highest associations of children continuing religious practice into adulthood came from "parents regularly talking with their children about religious matters as part of ordinary life." (Smith, page 54)



The Family as the Center of Identity and Values Formation

This goes back to the cultural shifts mentioned earlier. In the past, religion played a central role in our communities. Tight-knit towns and neighborhoods with strong Catholic roots often revolved around liturgical feasts, patron saint celebrations, and festivals. These events shaped our community life, with the parish at the heart of it all. Our behaviors were guided by “Christian values,” based on revelation, received teachings, and expert interpretation. The community then reinforced these values.



However, things have changed in recent decades. Religion has evolved into more of a personal accessory, helping individuals cope with life’s challenges and make informed choices rather than dictating a fixed set of beliefs. This shift can be attributed to a growing skepticism towards authority and institutions, driven by numerous scandals and perceived dishonesty. For many, accepting religious teaching relies on what feels helpful and right, not revelation and tradition. Personal beliefs are more subjective and self-reflective (we will return to this later).

This is the cultural landscape today. We need to address the issue directly by serving individual needs, and leading the faithful into a fruitful community. To use a common phrase, we need to meet people where they are now and lead them to the full expression and experience of faith and community life. It is not enough to depend on adult children remaining Catholic because they come from a Catholic family/went to a Catholic school/were confirmed, etc. These “reasons” are not keeping most of them Catholic.



Obviously, this subjective cultural mindset makes faith formation difficult. However, there is something we can build upon. In this shifting cultural landscape, the family takes on a crucial role in identity and values formation. It is the community unit capable of authentic, trustworthy interaction and influence. This is something the Church has always advocated.

Here the cultural tendency towards self-reflectivity can become our ally. Similar to an examination of conscience, we can reflect on our thoughts, actions, and identities in relation to cultural influences to understand the negative influences for what they are and reject them. This skill allows us to critically examine what we want from life and make more informed decisions instead of simply being swept away by broader social forces.

This is why parents who regularly discuss faith with their children establish strong religious foundations. Teaching children to critically self-reflect on the culture in light of authentic Catholic teaching equips them to navigate the culture—on their own. They learn to find answers well after leaving home based on reasonable, sound concepts for living wisely and intentionally. This personal agency is critical in today's post-modern world.

Ultimately, faith formation is a personal journey. While parents can offer guidance and support, individuals must decide for themselves and take ownership of their faith. This process is akin to releasing the brake on a car; it can only be done by the driver. In the same way, individuals must choose to follow their faith path willingly.



Nurturing Faith through Dialogue

Where to begin? First, by presenting solid Catholic doctrine. Then, with dialogue, children are helped to see the reason and logic behind true Catholic teaching. You want to allow hard questions and doubts to surface now when they can be addressed, not later when you have no influence. Admittedly, it can be scary when a child expresses doubts or asks questions. It may be easier to come down hard and say believe it or else. Sometimes this works.

Research shows that another approach works to better outcomes in the long term. Rather than simply demanding assent, parents and other formators can see the expression of doubt as an opportunity. Questioning, even doubting, is a natural part of a child's learning process. Beliefs that have been tested and chosen are more meaningful. Ultimately, this opens them to accepting God and putting Jesus in the center of their lives, which is the true goal.

Notably, these same principles are used in evangelization and missionary discipleship ministries for adults to great success. In essence, this approach provides the tools to navigate the complexities presented by society and culture. It recognizes that true growth and transformation come from within, and education's role is to facilitate that process rather than dictate outcomes. Exercising freedom is essential to being human, and it must be respected. Salvation is an invitation that can be accepted or refused, and everyone must choose without coercion. Such decisions tend to last.

God invites all youth into a relationship by bringing initial faith through the stages of discipleship. This is the pilgrimage from childhood, through adolescence, and into adulthood that leads toward becoming intentional disciples of Jesus Christ on mission.



What's Next?

Resources, retreats, and other moments of encounter with God are coming to assist parents, guardians and other formators in guiding children to mature faith and commitment to their vocation. These resources will begin to roll out in Spring 2024 and will continue to be developed in the years following.

- We will empower parents to talk to their children about the *Kerygma*, God's plan of salvation for mankind in Jesus Christ, as the central organizing principle of our formation efforts.
- We will foster memories that will carry through life using retreats, camps, prayer experiences, and other moments of encounter. These are profound moments of invitation to follow Jesus and are a necessary part of the journey.

Retreats include:

- ≈ *Do-It-Yourself Family Retreat* – 3rd Grade Holy Family Year
- ≈ *Call to Greatness* retreat – 5th Grade Call to Holiness Year
- ≈ *Discovering God's Hope for Me* retreat – 11th Grade Vocation Discernment and Adult Catholic Life



DIOCESE OF KANSAS CITY - ST. JOSEPH

One Family: RESTORED IN CHRIST - EQUIPPED FOR MISSION

kcsjatholic.org/theway