

# Family Faith at Stella Maris

Building Up the Catholic Home

Supporting families with children grades pre-K through 8.



2024-2025 Family Faith Offerings

Rev. 8/28/2024

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# From the Coordinator of Youth and Family Evangelization



Dear Parents,

The booklet you have in front of you describes our response to two calls to build something new.

First, we are crafting a new formation structure for your children by building on your relationships with your children. This is a response to the universal Church's call to ensure you, the parents, are the primary formators of your children, with the parish supporting you. The Catechism states this clearly when it says parents are "the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children" (§1656), and that "family catechesis precedes, accompanies, and enriches other forms of instruction in the faith" (§2226). It's also a response to Archbishop Schnurr's call for parishes in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati to cultivate a "new life of formation," one that "must include meaningful partnerships with parents that allow them to be the primary formators of their children."

This is the bottom line: without parental initiative in faith formation and in allowing the faith to establish a culture in the home, our efforts are increasingly futile. Countless studies over the last three decades have shown that parish and Catholic school efforts are only as effective at handing on the faith to the next generation as parents are living it out and handing it on in the home. We don't need studies to show us what we can see right before our eyes. The structures that successfully handed on the faith in previous generations have not been successful of late. As Fr. Tim put it, "it's not that our people or programs have failed, but rather, the cultural ground has shifted dramatically under our feet. Simply put, what worked so well just a few decades ago no longer works today. We have to accept this new reality, and as a result, change approaches to successfully address it."



So, we are building something new called Family Faith at Stella Maris. This booklet outlines numerous faith formation opportunities for whole families (yes, including you), for all families at Stella Maris (yes, including families whose children attend St. Bernadette or St. Thomas More schools). No two families are the same and no two journeys with Our Lord are the same. So, our offerings are intentionally designed to meet the needs of families wherever they are. Whether you've never done anything faith-related as a family before and hardly go to Mass, or you attend Mass weekly and you're hungry for more, we have something for you.

Second, as you know, we are all part of building this new reality called Stella Maris. Four parishes coming together as one. While this process certainly has challenges, it opens numerous opportunities as well. For example, any one parish would have a difficult time offering something-for-everyone. But we can. Rather than quadruplicating efforts, we're pooling resources and maximizing facilities for our offerings. Sure, this means some adjustments and perhaps traveling to one of the other campuses, but it's all part of building together through Beacons of Light.

As we embark on this construction, we must begin with the end goal in mind. The end of catechesis, the end of faith formation, is this: "to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ" (Catechesi Tradendae, §5). Faith formation isn't fundamentally about learning stuff, jumping through hoops to receive sacraments, or advancing to the next grade. There's no such thing as compulsory catechesis. Why? Because catechesis is ultimately about a relationship with Jesus Christ and deeper entry into it. And you can't force or require a relationship. Entering into this relationship is an invitation God extends to you and to me. And, when it comes to Beacons, we might even be able to say it's a little foretaste of heaven. What?! How? Well, eternal life with God and each other is the ultimate goal of being Catholic. And, in heaven, there will only be one parish.

Charles Marks  
Coordinator of Youth and Family Evangelization  
Stella Maris Family of Parishes  
[stellamarisfamily.org/family-faith](http://stellamarisfamily.org/family-faith)





# Building Up the Catholic Home — Our Strategy

We were already convicted to move in the direction of whole family formation before we read the summary of the latest study on the topic of Catholic youth faith formation. This 2024 study titled “Future Faithful Families,” conducted by CARA and the Peyton Institute, found once again that Catholic schools, youth groups, and other ministries — while very important — are “secondary and supportive” to a strong faith life within families. Then, the study went deeper. Dr. Gregory Popcak, a lead researcher in the study, said “Families are effective in passing on the faith to the next generation to the degree that the children felt that the faith was a source of warmth in their homes.” Did you catch that? The faith needs to be a source of warmth in the home.

Can the faith shape the culture of our homes? How can the parish, how can Stella Maris, support this kind of culture? This is our burning question. So, we’re redesigning our formation offerings for youth to incorporate whole families (yes, including parents). We’re doing this to help build up the next generation of Catholic families in the four parishes that comprise Stella Maris.

## Foundation. Framework. Finish.

Generally speaking, after the planning process, a home construction project has three critical phases: (1) establishing a strong foundation; (2) framing out the house, including the load bearing joists and walls; and (3) finishing the job by making everything look great.

If we were to use this analogy at Stella Maris, we know families are all over the place when it comes to building their spiritual homes. Some haven’t even thought about building up the faith in their homes, while others go on family retreats or pilgrimages — and everything in-between. To meet the needs of families, wherever they are in the construction process, we have crafted offerings to support this critical work.



### Foundation

Families need a strong foundation and they need to continue strengthening the foundation. Foundational work is never done and it’s built on the Word (Gospel) and the Sacraments. Offerings in this area include:

- Encounter Nights
- Sacramental Formation and RCIA adapted for Children

### Framework

Framing is all about building the structure on a solid foundation. It’s about going deeper into that foundation so as to aim higher. It’s a growth stage. For families looking for a greater commitment, we offer the following:

- Catechesis of the Good Shepherd
- Family Discipleship

### Finish

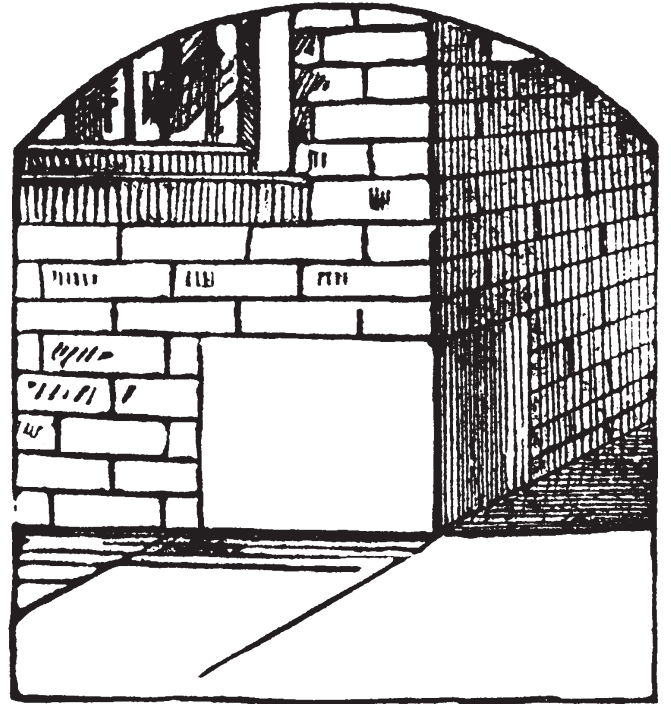
Finishing pulls everything together. Stella Maris is offering a host of family-friendly (and separate, parent-friendly) offerings throughout the year. We’ll highlight a few of those in this book.

# ENDURING FOUNDATION

Sacramental Preparation

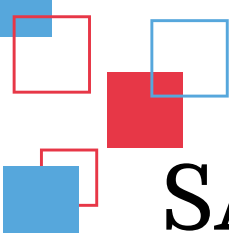
Encounter Nights

RCIA Adapted for Children



“The Christian home is the place where children receive the first proclamation of the faith. For this reason the family home is rightly called ‘the domestic church,’ a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity.”

— CCC 1666



# SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

First Reconciliation & First Communion

## Description

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, through God's mercy and forgiveness, we are reconciled with God and with the Church. In Holy Communion we receive of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist. It is our union with Jesus and the Church. For our 2nd grade students attending St. Thomas More & St. Bernadette Schools, formation for these Sacraments takes place during class time, but you are certainly welcome to engage in this whole family formation process as well!



## Session Times

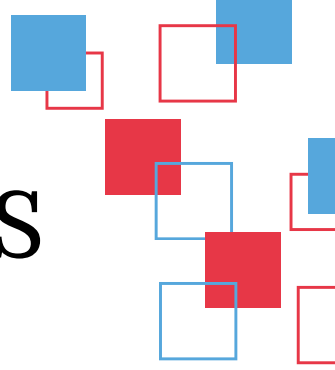
- First Reconciliation parent meeting- Sept. 4th @ 6:30pm
- First Reconciliation Retreat - Nov. 16th, 9am-12noon
- First Reconciliation (two dates available; families choose one)
  - Nov. 19, 2024 (6:30pm at St. Thomas More)
  - Nov. 20, 2024 (6:30pm at St. Bernadette)
- First Communion parent meeting- Jan. 29th @ 6:30pm
- First Communion Retreat - April 12th, 9am-12noon
- First Communion — Dates/Times vary based upon parish

## Cost & Commitment

Candidates are expected to attend all sessions. The cost of this offering is \$40 per child, per sacrament. (Please note that the registration process for 1st Reconciliation and 1st Communion has been combined, so there will be a one-time \$80 fee. No need to check out twice! Please only purchase 1 "ticket" per child on the registration page.) For more information, please visit [stellamarisfamily.org/sacramental-formation](http://stellamarisfamily.org/sacramental-formation).

# ENCOUNTER NIGHTS

## For the whole family



### Description

At Encounter Nights, we will gather for dinner, an activity, and formation for the whole family. Encounter Nights will inspire families by engaging topics that impact everyday family life. These events foster connection with the Lord, your family, and other Stella Maris families.



### Cost & Commitment

There is no cost associated with Encounter nights! You need only RSVP for each individual session, so there is no hard commitment for the whole year. We encourage each family to commit to attending at least two sessions throughout the year.

### Session Times

Sessions will take place on the following Wednesdays of the month at our St. Thomas More campus from 6:00-7:30pm.

- Oct. 23, 2024 – Praying as a Family
- Dec. 4, 2024 – A Time to Give (service night)
- Feb. 26, 2025 – Lent as a Family
- April 30, 2025 – Adoration - Guided Holy Hour

To learn more, please visit [stellamarisfamily.org/encounter-nights](http://stellamarisfamily.org/encounter-nights).





# IGNITE CONFIRMATION PREP

## Description

IGNITE is a dynamic, youth ministry approach to Confirmation formation for 8th graders. Candidates from the Family of Parishes will gather once-per-month for an evening session on a particular topic. A session will consist of a meal, games/activities, a keynote talk, small group discussion, a brief witness talk, and prayer. The program will be led by a staff member and an adult Core Team of volunteer catechists trained in youth ministry.

## Session Times and Topics

September 15, 2024 — IGNITE Kickoff Event  
October 12, 2024 — IGNITE Retreat w/ NET Ministries  
November 10, 2024 — The Word: Hearing God's Voice in the Bible  
December 8, 2024 — Prayer  
January 12, 2025 — Life in Christ: Virtue, Grace, and Community  
February 9, 2025 — Mission: Yours, Mine, and Ours  
March 9, 2025 — The Holy Spirit  
April 13, 2025 — On the Sacrament of Confirmation  
May 12, 2025 — Confirmation Rehearsal  
May 13, 2025 — Sacrament of Confirmation @ the Cathedral  
May 18, 2025 — Living the Abundant Life: Life after Confirmation

## Cost & Commitment

The cost of this offering is \$40, to offset costs for programming, meals, resources, and t-shirts. This is an annual commitment, and attendance is required at the above sessions. Learn more at [sttm.org/ignite](http://sttm.org/ignite).



# RCIA ADAPTED FOR CHILDREN

## Description

Within our family of parishes, there are sometimes situations where children have not been baptized in the faith nor participated in the Sacraments of Initiation into the Catholic Church. For children who have reached the age of 7 or older, the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (all who have reached the age of reason) is adapted for children. Contact Charles Marks ([cmarks@stellmarisfamily.org](mailto:cmarks@stellmarisfamily.org)) if you have a child who is looking to come into the Church.



# STURDY FRAMEWORK

## Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

### Family Discipleship

Archbishop Scnurr on the classroom:  
"Classroom environments typically do not  
'constitute the best places for the unfolding  
of catechetical activities' (DC 222). I  
encourage you to dream of new  
catechetical environments that better serve  
the ongoing conversion of young people."



# CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

For children ages 3 to 6 years old

## Description

Stella Maris Parish Family offers Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) to meet the child's spiritual needs through a Montessori-inspired hand, head, and heart faith formation. This approach seeks to nurture the relationship between each child and God, and through the prepared space allows the child time to enjoy that relationship. The CGS experience takes place in a prepared room called the atrium, which is filled with handcrafted child-sized materials. Here, children are invited into prayer, given individual or group presentations based on Scripture or the liturgy, and allotted time for individual work. The catechist is attentive to each child's unspoken desire: "help me come closer to God by myself."



## Cost & Commitment

The cost of this offering is \$100 for the course which runs weekly from September 2024 until May 2025. Registration information available soon. In the meantime, you can learn much more about CGS by visiting [stellamarisfamily.org/cgs](https://stellamarisfamily.org/cgs).



# FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

## Description

Our Stella Maris Family of Parishes is made up of many different families, all in a different place in their walk with the Lord. A one-size-fits-all approach for helping families grow in their faith simply does not serve our families best. We want to be able to meet you and hear about your experience of faith as a family. We can then decide on a discipleship pathway that will best fit your family.

Family discipleship supports parents as the primary formators of their children by providing tangible and practical ways for them to study and live their faith at home. In addition to at home resources, each family will be accompanied by a mentor from the parish.

All families with children up to age 18 are invited to explore Family Discipleship.

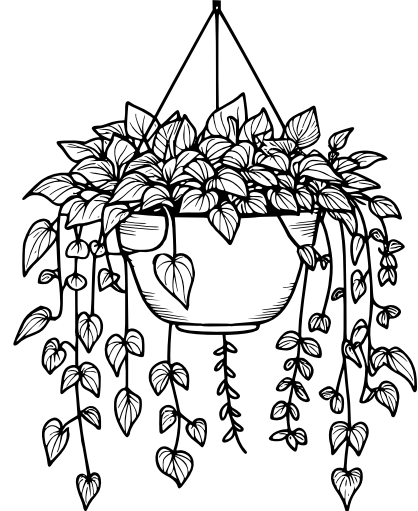
We utilize content and material from Faith and Family Life Catholic Ministries. These materials provide formative, family friendly content in a way that is not overwhelming to parents and can be done whenever best fits your family family life. We can also explore content and material from other sources to best suit your needs.



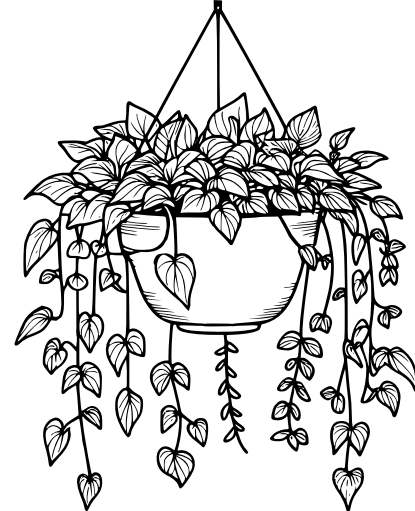
## Cost

Costs will vary depending on what resources will be utilized for your family's particular path. We do not want any costs to stand in the way of providing your family with the best support and resources possible. We anticipate the costs associated with Family Discipleship to be minimal.

Contact Charles Marks [cmarks@stellamarisfamily.org](mailto:cmarks@stellamarisfamily.org) to have an exploratory meeting to discern and discover your family's unique discipleship pathway.



# FINISHING TOUCHES



**Stella Maris Devotional Concert**

**The Vigil Project**

**Traditional Parish Mission with Jim Beckman**

“The home is the first school of  
Christian life and ”a school for  
human enrichment.”

— CCC 1657



# TO JESUS THROUGH MARY, STAR OF THE SEA

A devotional program of choral singing and meditations honoring Our Lady on the feast of St. John Paul II and in the presence of the International Pilgrim Virgin Statue of Our Lady of Fatima.

**October 22nd, 2024 @ 7PM | St. Thomas More Church**



As a special way of showing our devotion to Our Lady in the month of October, our parish family will host a unique event honoring Mary under her title of Stella Maris, meaning Star of the Sea. Join us on the feast of St. John Paul II for a devotional program of choral singing and meditations honoring Our Lady. The program will include musical settings of the ancient and beautiful prayer, "Ave Maris Stella" from Gregorian chant to those by modern composers. As well as hearing music that will reach into the soul, listening to selections from writings of the saints, we will be invited to pray and meditate on the Blessed Mother who is our loving guide as she points the way towards her Son and ultimately to Heaven.

# THE VIGIL PROJECT

December 7, 2024 @ 7PM, St. Bernadette Church



Stella Maris has the opportunity to host a night of prayerful song with The Vigil Project. Their "Way of the Star" program is a one-night Advent mission experience created to awaken Catholic parishes to the powerful mystery of the Incarnation and to stir the hearts of participants in longing for their Savior. Drawing heavily from the practices of Ignatian imaginative meditation and Lectio Divina, we enter into the familiar scenes of the Infancy Narrative to experience them with fresh minds and hearts. The evening culminates in an encounter with Christ's True Presence during a time of Eucharistic Adoration, accompanied by songs of adoration from The Vigil Project.



# STELLA MARIS LENTEN MISSION

## The Light Shines in the Darkness

**March 9-11, 2025 at 7PM | St. Thomas More Church**

A parish mission is an occasion of grace — a time to step away from our busy schedules and prioritize our relationship with Jesus. This year, Stella Maris is happy to welcome Mr. Jim Beckman as our mission preacher.

Jim serves as the Executive Director of ImpactCenter, an apostolate dedicated to ministering to ministers and leadership development in the Catholic Church. A graduate of both Franciscan University and the Augustine Institute, Jim has served in various roles of leadership for national, regional and local ministry over the years. He is a dynamic and passionate speaker and has a great love for the Catholic faith and for discipleship.



The Lenten Mission is an occasion for prayer, renewal, and conversion. More details to come!



# HOW TO REGISTER

Please follow these steps to register for any of our Family Faith offerings at Stella Maris:

1. Visit <https://stellamarisfamily.org/family-faith/>
2. Find the offering that interests you in the dropdown menu at the top right of the page, or by scrolling down the page to the section titled, "What is Family Faith at Stella Maris?"
3. Each individual offering will have a dark blue "Register Now" button on it's webpage.
4. Click the "Register" button to be taken to the registration page and checkout process.
5. Follow all prompts during the checkout process. Please be sure to check for your confirmation email after submission.
6. Please note that all family faith registration will be conducted online this year through the above method.

## Financial Assistance

We do not want finances to affect your family's ability to participate in any of our family faith offerings this year. If you need a discount or registration fees waived, please reach out to our Coordinator of Youth and Family Evangelization, Charles Marks ([cmarks@stellamarisfamily.org](mailto:cmarks@stellamarisfamily.org)).

Feel free to contact our team with any questions you may have regarding our offerings this year or the registration process.



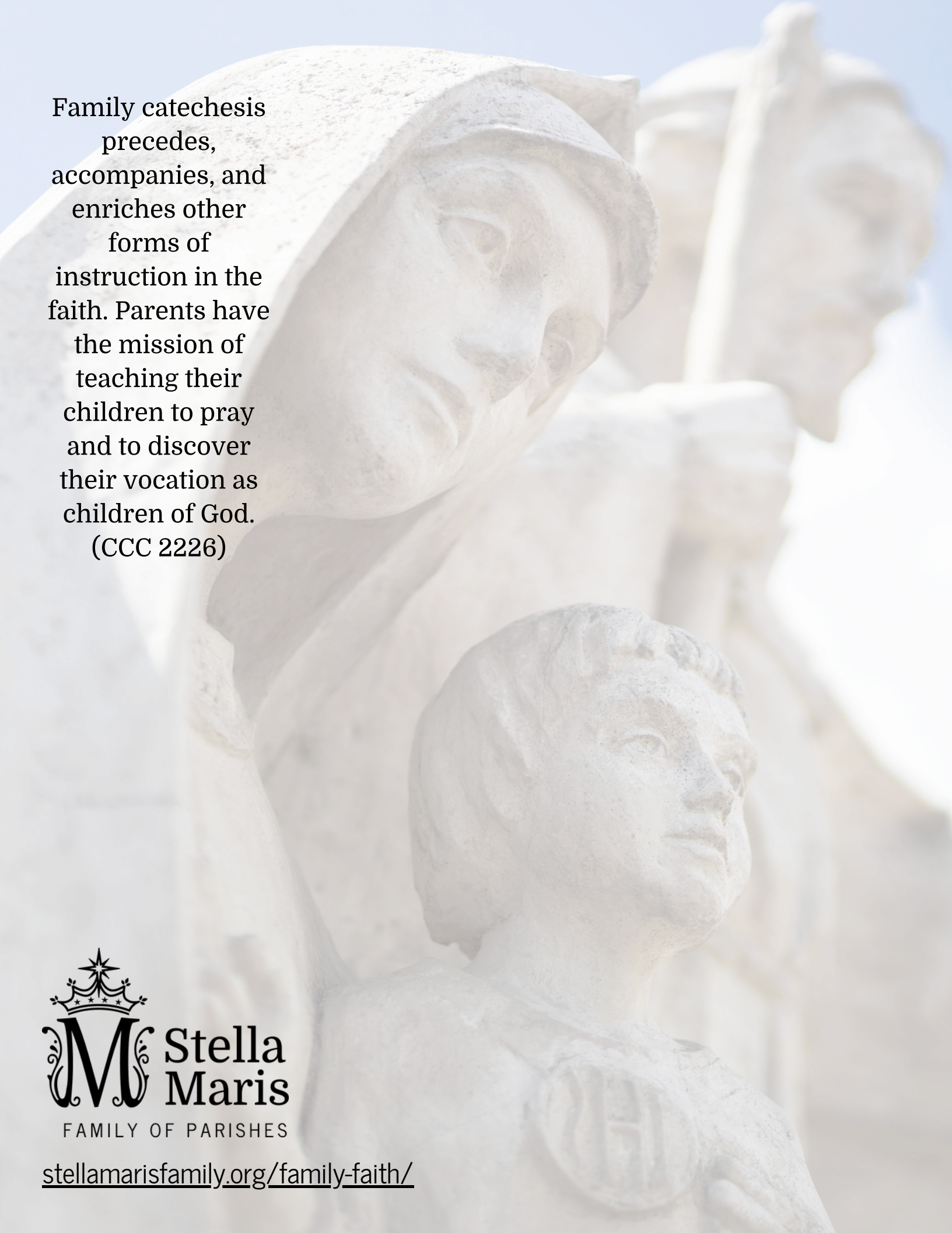
**Charles Marks**  
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**Mary Clare Smith**  
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Family catechesis  
precedes,  
accompanies, and  
enriches other  
forms of  
instruction in the  
faith. Parents have  
the mission of  
teaching their  
children to pray  
and to discover  
their vocation as  
children of God.  
(CCC 2226)



[stellamarisfamily.org/family-faith/](http://stellamarisfamily.org/family-faith/)