



*A Family Service and Mission Experience for Your Parish*

Holding Hands, Holy Hands, and Healing Hands

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WELCOME TO...



*A Family Service and Mission Experience for Your Parish*

**We're glad you're here!**

Welcome to *Families on a Mission* (FOAM)! As a *Families on a Mission* parish, you join parishes around the country that are giving families a key part of what they need to thrive as families of vibrant faith. The Center for Ministry Development is excited to be your partner in service to and with families. You are forging new ground in family ministry, and *FOAM* will help you provide a positive experience for families that they will never forget while also providing much-needed service in your local community.

Imagine families serving together, praying together, eating together, talking together, and playing together! All of this will happen with *Families on a Mission*. Imagine service organizations in your community talking about the great resource your parish is for people in need! Imagine pulling together a team of volunteers who will put on a tested program that gets people of all ages excited about Catholic service! *FOAM* can help you do all of this. We're glad you are taking this journey with us and with other Catholic parishes.



**We're listening to you!**

*Families on a Mission* is one of the most exciting service immersion innovations to become available in recent years. It grew out of the consistent and growing need to provide more opportunities for families to grow in their faith together. We have been listening through focus groups and other conversations as we have traveled around the country in recent years. You told us that you wanted something that was flexible, family-friendly, formational, and fun. FOAM was developed in response to what you told us. There really is nothing else like it, and we are confident that it can make a big difference in the lives of those who accept the invitation to participate.

Thank you for serving your families and your community in such a meaningful and life-changing way. We are honored to be serving with you.



## What is Families on a Mission?

### **Catholics are Servants**

Catholics have been serving people in need for as long as there have been Catholics. Service is part of our core identity. Service and Catholicism are inseparable. In recent years, there has developed a growing body of research showing that family service is a critically important component to healthy faith growth in families. *Families on a Mission* seeks to provide parishes an opportunity to nurture the Catholic tradition of service in a family setting.

### **Making Connections**

*Families on a Mission* is a parish-based, service learning immersion experience which connects families in a particular parish with each other, with service opportunities in their local community, and with the great tradition of Catholic social teaching. Faith formation research concludes that the Catholic community is strengthened when families serve together, pray together, and engage in faith discussions together. Parish leaders will find *Families on a Mission* to be an outstanding resource to assist families with these faith practices by creating safe and supportive environments in which families can learn and master the practices while planning ways to incorporate them into their routines.

### **Your Parish: An Indispensable Community Resource**

*Families on a Mission* is also a way for a parish to reach out to the local community in response to deep human need. Every community is in need of service. Christian service is a unique response to human need because it is more than just a way to solve a problem. Christian service is a person-to-person encounter in which all participants are invited to discover and experience the healing compassion of Christ the servant and the Christ who calls out through the voices of the poor among us. When families are invited to experience Christian service, they will develop the understanding that service is not only an event; it is also a lifestyle. *Families on a Mission* is designed to teach key underlying principles of Christian service and to encourage ongoing service beyond the three programming days. Parishes that adopt the annual practice of *Families on a Mission* will develop a unique reputation as a necessary healing resource in the local civic community. Your parish will become a parish filled with families that serve in organized and informal ways throughout the community. Over time, people who are not even members of the church will notice the positive and irreplaceable presence that your parish has become in the local community.

## **Structure of Families on a Mission**

The structure of *Families on a Mission* includes an evening orientation followed by three days of service immersion and service learning. The orientation includes an opportunity for families to “break the ice” with each other while learning about the key components of *Families on a Mission*. There are also opportunities for families to learn about and even connect with representatives from local service agencies which have been invited to participate in *Families on a Mission* as service sites.

The three days of service are characterized by an upbeat morning gathering and sending from the parish church. The families then go to local service sites, with a bag lunch brought from home, to participate in service experiences. They return to the parish church in the afternoon to explore the meaning of their service experiences in light of the great tradition of Catholic social teaching. These service learning sessions are marked by engaging activities, crafts, snacks, prayer, discussions, audio-visual presentations, and more. Families will explore a different dimension of a program theme each day. They will unlock the meaning of a daily Bible passage. After preparations for the next day, the session closes with a simple but satisfying meal provided by the parish so that families will not need to go home and prepare a meal after a long day of service and learning.

The third day of service is similar to the first two but ends with a liturgical celebration of the Eucharist. *Families on a Mission* includes a complete planning sheet for the liturgy. This celebration features the prayer runners which have been prepared over the three days of the program and closes with a commissioning of the families to be visible Christian families of service in the local community. Each family is presented with a *Bible* and a handout with instructions on how to use the Bible and their customized prayer runner together in order to create a lifestyle of Christian service at home.

## **Comprehensive Resources**

Parish leaders will appreciate the comprehensive and flexible nature of the program. There are resources to help leaders plan, recruit, market, and execute the details of *Families on a Mission*. There are resources designed to build positive and productive relationships with service agencies in the local community. Parish leaders will receive an online resource kit. The documents are available in Microsoft Word format for easy adaptation. *Families on a Mission* provides everything the parish leader needs to offer a well-organized and meaningful service learning experience for families.

## **Why is Family Service so Important?**

Eugene Roehlkepartain and Jenny Friedman summarized research results in their 2009 article, “Engaging Families in Service: Broadening Service-Learning's Reach, Impact, and Support.” The article draws on an abundance of research showing the benefits of family service to children, youth, parents, whole families, service organizations and the

civic community in general. Providing ways for families to serve together is good for everyone.

Follow this link to read the full article:

<https://www.search-institute.org/downloadable/2009-Roehlkepartain-Families-SL-NSLC.pdf>

SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE



## Program Roles and Responsibilities

### Introduction to the Team Concept

*Families on a Mission* is designed to be implemented by a qualified and enthusiastic core team made up of parish staff and volunteers. The core team is comprised of individuals who take responsibility for the roles described in this document. Creating a core team serves many purposes. A team approach is rooted in our baptismal call to be connected with each other in communion with Christ. Working as a team, rather than individually, signifies and makes real our commitment to community. There are also obvious practical benefits. The work will be distributed so that no one person is overwhelmed with the many tasks involved in executing an outstanding program. The team will also be valuable for networking within and beyond the parish as well as promoting awareness of and participation in *Families on a Mission*. Finally, work finds its joy in the friendships that are built when people come together to give their gifts to a common pursuit. *Families on a Mission* is not just a task to get done; it is a ministry to be experienced.

### The Families on a Mission Core Team:

#### Program Director

The Program Director oversees *Families on a Mission* from start to finish, from the promotion of the idea early in the year to the program follow-up in the summer and fall. The Program Director needs to be knowledgeable about every aspect of *Families on a Mission*. This role is normally assumed by a parish staff member unless there is a well-trained volunteer who is committed to the administration of *Families on a Mission*. The Program Director calls together and works with the *Families on a Mission* team, which is comprised of the various coordinators and facilitators.

#### Skills and Characteristics of the Program Director:

- Visionary
- Organized
- Team-builder
- Delegator
- Strong attention to detail
- Committed to a vision of family ministry and intergenerational learning

- Excellent communicator (written and oral)

## **Fun Facilitator**

The Fun Facilitator is responsible for leading the icebreakers each morning as the families gather. This person will also teach the *Lean on Me* line dance.

Skills and Characteristics of the Fun Facilitator:

- Organized
- Reliable
- Strong public speaker
- Relates effectively with all age groups
- Playful

## **Activity Facilitators**

Activity Facilitators lead the service learning sessions for the FOAM participants. Activity Facilitators ideally will be certified catechists in the local diocese with demonstrated skills for working with intergenerational groups using dynamic and engaging methods that are appropriate for all ages.

Skills and Characteristics of an Activity Facilitator:

- Organized
- Reliable
- Creative
- Knowledgeable about Catholic social teaching
- Relates effectively with all age groups
- Strong attention to detail
- Strong public speaker

## **Food Coordinator**

The Food Coordinator leads a team that will plan, purchase, prepare, and serve all snacks and meals at the church during the program sessions. The Food Coordinator is not responsible for food at the service sites. Families are asked to pack lunches each day to take to the service sites.

Skills and Characteristics of the Food Coordinator:

- Organized
- Reliable
- Knowledgeable about nutrition and safe food preparation and service
- Team-builder

## **Prayer & Worship Coordinator**

The Prayer & Worship Coordinator leads a team that will provide meaningful and engaging prayer services using the outlines provided in the Prayer & Worship resource

for *Families on a Mission*. This team provides music for prayer and worship as well as music that may be used during program sessions. Finally, the Prayer & Worship Coordinator leads the preparation for the closing liturgy.

Skills and Characteristics of the Prayer & Worship Coordinator:

- Prayerful
- Organized
- Reliable
- Able to engage all ages in prayer and liturgy
- Knowledgeable about Catholic prayer and liturgy
- Musically inclined
- Team-builder

## **Facilities Coordinator**

The Facilities Coordinator sets up and tears down tables, chairs, props, AV equipment, etc. for the program sessions. This person makes sure the meeting rooms and restrooms are clean and in good working condition.

Skills and Characteristics of the Facilities Coordinator:

- Organized
- Reliable
- Knowledgeable about the physical plant of the parish
- Strong attention to detail

## **Communications Coordinator**

The Communications Coordinator is responsible for promoting *Families on a Mission* throughout the parish and in the local community. The Communications Coordinator markets *FOAM* to families to build momentum for successful registrations. This person promotes *FOAM* among leaders, including the pastor, and organizations throughout the parish to gain their support and to mine their wisdom for the benefit of the core team. Marketing materials, press releases, newsletters, and mailings are all coordinated and delivered by this person. Digital promotion through the parish website and email campaigns is also an important part of this position.

Skills and Characteristics of the Communications Coordinator:

- Organized
- Reliable
- Creative
- Knowledgeable about marketing and promotions
- Excellent communicator (written and oral)
- Effective networking skills
- Strong computer skills



## Service Sites Coordinator

The Service Sites Coordinator establishes and maintains a positive working relationship with all of the service sites that will be used during *Families on a Mission*. The Service Site Coordinator establishes a list of service sites for the program, makes initial contact with each site, visits each site with the FOAM Director, and completes a Work Site Description Sheet for each service site that will be used for the program.

Skills and Characteristics of the Service Sites Coordinator:

- Organized
- Reliable
- Knowledgeable about social services agencies in your community
- Excellent communicator (written and oral)
- Strong attention to detail
- Strong relationship skills



## Scheduling Options

*Families on a Mission* offers great flexibility for scheduling. You are in the driver's seat in terms of how you use this innovative resource. While the basic or typical schedule is to offer *FOAM* for three consecutive days preceded by an evening of orientation, you'll see that there are a number of other ways to think about *FOAM* scheduling and its application in a variety of ministry settings.

### Typical *FOAM* Schedule

#### Orientation Session

The orientation session is two-hours long. We recommend scheduling it any time on the day before the first day of service. Here are the main components of the orientation session:

- Registration, Refreshments, and Handprints on Table Runners (20 minutes)
- Welcome, Introductions, and Family Posters (40 minutes)
- Opening Prayer (20 minutes)
- Introduction to *Families on a Mission* (20 minutes)
- Family Huddles (15 minutes)
- Dismissal (5 minutes)

#### The Service Learning Sessions

There are three days of service and service learning. The *FOAM* kit provides resources for each day. The two main sections of each day are the morning send-off (Part 1) before the families leave for their service sites and the learning session (Part 2 and following) after the families return to the church from the service sites. The typical experience of *FOAM* will include three consecutive days of service following the orientation. Prayers, meals, icebreakers, and a closing liturgy are all included in the schedule below.

### DAY 1

#### Part 1: The Morning Send-Off (30 minutes)

- Gathering: Conversation/Icebreakers/Activities
- Opening Activity: *Lean On Me* Line Dance
- Introduce the Theme for the Day
- Dismiss the participants to their service sites
- Assign someone to take a photo of each participant doing service at the site (photos will be used for one of the craft activities on Day 2)

**Part 2: Gathering back at the Parish (15 minutes)**

Gathering/Conversation/Light snack

**Part 3: Remember the Day (15 minutes)**

Journaling and Discussion

**Part 4: Connect to the Theme**

- Human Knot Activity (20 minutes)
- What Did you Expect? (45 minutes)
- Symbols for the Table Runners (45 minutes)

**Part 5: Family Huddles (10 minutes)**

**Part 6: Dinner (30 minutes)**

**Part 7: Closing Prayer (10 minutes)**

**DAY 2**

**Part 1: The Morning Send-Off (30 minutes)**

- Gathering: Conversation/Icebreakers/Activities
- Opening Activity: *Lean On Me* Line Dance
- Introduce the Theme for the Day
- Dismiss the participants to their service sites

**Part 2: Gathering back at the Parish (15 minutes)**

Gathering/Conversation/Light snack

**Part 3: Remember the Day (15 minutes)**

Journaling and Discussion

**Part 4: Connect to the Theme**

- Serving with the Strength that God Supplies (20 minutes)
- My Gifts (30 minutes)
- Symbols for the table runners (30 minutes)

**Part 5: Family Huddles (10 minutes)**

**Part 6: Dinner (30 minutes)**

**Part 7: Closing Prayer (30 minutes)**

## **DAY 3**

### **Part 1: The Morning Send-Off (30 minutes)**

- Gathering: Conversation/Icebreakers/Activities
- Opening Activity: *Lean On Me* Line Dance
- Introduce the Theme for the Day
- Dismiss the participants to their service sites

### **Part 2: Gathering back at the Parish (15 minutes)**

Gathering/Conversation/Light snack

### **Part 3: Remember the Day**

- Journaling and Discussion (15 minutes)
- Symbols for the Table Runners (25 minutes)

### **Part 4: Connect to the Theme**

- Family Massages (15 minutes)
- Bringing It Home (30 minutes)

### **Part 5: General Sharing (30 minutes)**

### **Part 6: Closing Liturgy (45 minutes)**

## Alternative FOAM Schedules

### A Long Weekend

While most parishes will find that they will need to schedule the service experiences during the weekdays due to the schedules of service sites, it is possible that a parish could arrange for a long weekend of service depending upon the kind of service chosen by the parish. If so, the parish can just shift the orientation to a Thursday evening and do the service days on the following Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The closing liturgy now becomes a Sunday liturgy, and will need to be planned differently from the one included in the kit. A similar option is to start on Friday evening and end on Monday.

### Weekends Only

Some parishes may want to include more families by offering a weekend-only option. Families could be oriented on a Friday night. They could do two days of service on the Saturday and Sunday following the orientation. They could then return to the service site the following Saturday and finish with Saturday evening liturgy.

A challenge with this model will be keeping families connected to the momentum of FOAM during the intervening week. With technology, this can be much easier. Daily posts on a parish webpage dedicated to FOAM would be a great idea. Families could receive emails and texts reminding them to look at the webpage each day. The webpage could include simple information about the progress made over the weekend, information about the service site, and a brief mealtime prayer families can share that helps to carry the theme of FOAM throughout the week. You could also assign a photographer and videographer to capture scenes from the service site and the service learning sessions over the first weekend. These can be posted on the webpage. That's a great way to get families to take the time to look at the page.

You will also want to build energy for the upcoming day of service as the second weekend approaches. You could even call the families together for an evening of liturgy planning, crafts, and snacks during the week.

### Take FOAM on the Road

While *Families on a Mission* most likely will be offered in your local community, there is no reason why a parish cannot plan a service trip out-of-state or even abroad and use the FOAM materials as the foundation for the service learning and reflection that are necessary for any service immersion experience. You can plan your trip and be confident that those who travel will carry with them a stellar resource that will help them unpack the spiritual meaning of their good work. While the materials are written for an intergenerational setting, they can easily be adapted to be appropriate for teen and/or adult service groups.

### **Other Uses for FOAM**

The service learning sessions included in your FOAM kit are very versatile. You may have an abundance of service experiences happening in your parish on a regular basis. Adult groups, teen groups, and family groups engage in all kinds of service but often aren't given the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of Catholic service. The FOAM kit can be used and modified to help you form other parishioners who are doing service. The sessions will help them pray about and reflect upon the Catholic character of their work. FOAM was written to be applicable to any kind of service work, so you will have no trouble applying the lessons to almost any experience of service.

### **Multiple FOAMs**

FOAM works well with small numbers of families as well as larger groups as long as you have ample volunteers to manage the learning sessions. If you want to keep the FOAM experience small, you could offer it multiple times throughout the year. One advantage of this is that you could keep a steady supply of volunteers working at your service sites. You wouldn't need to establish new service sites for every offering of FOAM. New families with each session of FOAM will offer more service to a limited number of service sites that you use for every offering of FOAM. This will not only save you time, but will also solidify your parish's commitment to a number of key service sites.

As you can see, *Families on a Mission* is a very flexible resource. It really puts you in the driver's seat.



## Program Themes

### Day 1 Holding Hands: We Serve Together

*The experience of Catholic service is a communal experience. I serve, not by or for myself, but with hands grasped in partnership with God, my family, my parish, my community (service agencies), and with those in need. Today's session will encourage participants to serve together with others.*

#### Scripture

Acts 2:44-47

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.

Your reflections on the theme...

### Day 2 Holy Hands: Jesus Serves in Us

*Catholic service is inspired by, supported by, and ultimately accomplished by Jesus Christ through the work of caring people. Our service receives its meaning from Jesus; our ability to serve in itself is a gift from Jesus, which comes to us through the Church. Today's session will empower participants to use their unique God-given gifts as they serve others.*

#### Scripture

1 Peter 4:11

Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Your reflections on the theme...



## Day 3 Healing Hands: Service Gives New Life to Our Community

*Service makes a difference by healing a wounded community and bringing new life. It has always been a characteristic of Catholic communities to be life-giving by healing the hurts of the world. Our service has made a difference and will continue to make a difference in the lives of those we served and in our own lives.*

### **Scripture**

Matthew 8:14-17

When Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever; he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she got up and began to serve him. That evening they brought to him many who were possessed with demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and cured all who were sick. This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases."

Your reflections on the theme...



## Administrative Timeline

This suggested timeline is intended for use by the FOAM Director.

### 6 Months before the Program

- Read through all *FOAM* materials to familiarize yourself with the overall program.
- Establish dates for program.
- Reserve parish space for *FOAM*.
- Recruit core team (refer to Roles and Responsibilities page).
- Meet individually with each core team member to review responsibilities and to provide any relevant reading material related to the task for the team member.
- Begin running bulletin blurbs in cooperation with the Communications Coordinator (provided).
- Create a proposed list of potential service sites.

### 5 Months before the Program

- Continue to meet individually with core team members if all meetings were not scheduled in the previous month.
- Prepare an agenda for the first full core team meeting, including the following:
  - Prayer
  - Introduction of team members and team-building activities
  - Presentation of the vision of *Families on a Mission*
  - Presentation of program schedule of *Families on a Mission*
  - Presentation of implementation timeline of *Families on a Mission*
  - Brainstorm session to create a complete list of potential service sites
  - Team meeting schedule established
  - Tasks to be accomplished before next scheduled team meeting
- Call first full core team meeting (include coordinators and facilitators).
- Begin working with the Service Sites Coordinator to make contact with proposed service sites.
- Run next bulletin blurb.

### 4 Months before the Program

- Work with Communications Coordinator to develop marketing campaign. The marketing campaign should include:
  - Announcements to the whole community

- *FOAM* page on the parish website
- Posters
- Regular mailings (emails) to target audiences such as families involved in the parish faith formation program
- Phone calls to or in-person conversations with families who are likely participants in *FOAM*
- Continued monthly bulletin blurbs
- Prepare an agenda for the next team meeting based upon the work agreed upon at the last meeting.
- Accompany the Service Sites Coordinator on site visits.

### **3 Months before the Program**

- Check in with the Service Sites Coordinator to set the list of sites available for the program.
- Begin accepting registrations from families.
- Continue implementing the marketing campaign.
- Work with the Food Coordinator to set a menu for *FOAM* meals.

### **2 Months before the Program**

- Work with Activity Facilitators and the Fun Facilitator to review preparation details for the orientation session and each learning session.
- Work with the Prayer & Worship Coordinator to review all of the prayer and liturgy details.
- Request a progress update from the Service Sites Coordinator.
- Request a progress update from the Communications Coordinator.

### **1 Month before the Program**

- Call a core team meeting to review progress and to assign final preparations tasks.
- Review data from registration forms and make service site assignments.
- Complete, or collect from the appropriate team member, the following forms:
  - Daily Attendance Template
  - Photo and Video Release Form (if you intend to share photos/videos with your parish community)
  - Work Site Rosters
  - Any waivers required by the work sites
- Re-read all of the *FOAM* materials, especially the orientation and learning sessions, to immerse yourself in the spirit of *FOAM* as the program draws closer.



*A Family Service and Mission Experience for Your Parish*

## *Orientation Session for Families*

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# Orientation

## Session Outline

### Session Objective

To prepare for active and conscious participation in the experience of *Families on a Mission*

### Session at a Glance

- Registration, Refreshments, and Handprints on Table Runners (20 minutes)
- Welcome, Introductions, and Family Posters (40 minutes)
- Opening Prayer (20 minutes)
- Introduction to *Families on a Mission* (20 minutes)
- Family Huddles (15 minutes)
- Dismissal (5 minutes)

### Supplies and Preparation

#### Registration

- Team member prepped to greet each family at the door and direct them to the registration area
- Upbeat recorded music (See music recommendations in the Director's manual for suggestions.)
- Table with chairs for registration team
- Pencils
- Family registration forms (These will have been completed and turned in by families ahead of time.)
- Work site rosters

#### Handprints on Table Runners

- A table runner for each family (It is best to put newspapers, plastic, or a tarp under the table runners to protect against staining.)
- Acrylic fabric paint in a variety of colors
- Paintbrushes (about one inch wide) for each color paint
- Soap, warm water, wash basins, towels
- Drop cloths

#### Refreshments

- Table
- Small plates
- Utensils (serving and eating)
- Napkins
- Food
- Beverages

### **Welcome and Introductions**

- A sample family poster (See the instructions for the family poster below, and prepare a sample poster that you will display when you give the instructions.)
- Tables and chairs for each family
- Poster board (one per family)
- Crayons or markers (one set per family)
- PowerPoint slides with video projector

### **Opening Prayer**

- Prayer space with Bible
- Candle with matches
- Places for the posters to be displayed

### **Closing**

- Song

## Gathering Preparation

Display PowerPoint Slide 1.

Prepare a welcoming and comfortable environment for the arriving families.

A welcoming place will include:

- Sufficient planning and preparation so that you are not rushing around and distracted as participants arrive
- A friendly greeting for everyone
- Refreshments
- Comfortable seating
- An appropriate prayer space
- Designated areas for crafts, food, discussions, etc. Designate these areas with colorful signs; you might consider dividing a large room with accordion panels and invite participants to decorate them graffiti-style each day. These could be used over and over for a variety of programs by painting them with primer each time you use them for a new program.
- Conversation – Be prepared to engage the participants in conversation as they arrive. What will you talk about with the adults, with the teens, and with the children? Consider the following guidelines for successful conversations:
  - **It's About the Other:** Talk about what is going on in the life of your conversation partner, and only offer information about your life when it is asked for.
  - **Balance:** Keep the conversation balanced between talking and listening. Create space for your conversation partner to share his/her thoughts.
  - **Focus:** Remain focused on the conversation by keeping eye contact and by maintaining concentration on the subject of the conversation.

## Registration (20 minutes)

Families registered ahead of time with the *FOAM Registration Form* (provided). These completed forms will need to be at the registration table. Check off the names of all participants as they arrive.

Check off the names of participants on the *Work Site Roster* forms. Make adjustments for participants who do not show up for the program so that there will be enough workers at each site if you have multiple work sites.

Direct participants to move to the Handprints on Table Runners activity after their names are checked off on your forms.

## Handprints on Table Runners

While registration is proceeding, invite participants who are signed in to put their handprints on the table runners which will be used throughout the service days and at the closing liturgy. Families will take them home after the third day of the program. Follow these guidelines:



- The cloth has space around the edges for handprints and space in the center for symbols that the family members will add each day. See *Handout 1: Prayer Cloth Diagram* to get a clear idea of what the cloth should look like.
- Invite the participant to choose a color of paint. (Some individuals will inevitably want multiple colors for their handprints; encourage the creativity!)
- Use the paintbrush to paint each participant's hands.
- Guide the participant to place a print on the edge of the cloth.
- Help the participant press directly down on the cloth so the entire handprint is transferred to the cloth.
- Provide soap, water, and towels for hand washing.

When all participants have added a handprint, display the table runners in the prayer space. Families have found it meaningful to place their hands on the cloth during the prayer sessions throughout the week. This may not be possible for this evening's prayer, as the paint will probably still be wet.

### Refreshments

Refreshments will be served during the registration process and while handprints are being added to the prayer cloth. The goal is to create an environment for conversation among all the participants. Provide substantial appetizers as a snack so that families will not have to cook dinner before they arrive. The appetizers served on small plates will also allow participants to mingle around the table runner area as they are being created.

## Welcome and Introductions: Family Posters (40 minutes)

### Slide 1

Use these or similar words to welcome the participants:

*Welcome to Families on a Mission! We hope this will bring all of us closer together as we do good work for our community. I'm very excited to be with you to share this amazing experience of Catholic service and learning in a way that will be lots of fun for all of us.*

*We want to begin by getting to know the families who are with us a little better. In a moment, I'll give each family a poster board and some crayons. Your task will be to create a poster that will help other families get to know a little about your family and the individual members of your family.*

*We ask that your family poster include the following items:*

- 1. Your family name*
- 2. A symbol or picture of something or a couple of things that your family enjoys doing together (all family members should participate in creating this symbol or picture)*
- 3. A symbol or picture of something each individual family member loves to do (each member will add a symbol/picture)*
- 4. A symbol or picture of how your family has served others in the past*
- 5. Be sure to add immediate family members (parents/siblings) to your poster even if they aren't present today*

*I would like to share a poster with you that I prepared earlier as a sample.*

### Slide 2

After you finish introducing your family with your poster, distribute the supplies to each family and let them get started on their posters. Inform them that they have 15 minutes to complete their posters.

When the families have completed their posters, invite each family to share a little about their family with the others. If you have a large number of families, create groups of three or four families for the sharing.

After the opening prayer (you will use the posters during the prayer), display the posters and encourage families to take time during the week to browse the posters as a way of learning something about each family.

When the family introductions are finished, move all the participants to the prayer space.

## Opening Prayer (20 minutes)

Recommended Gathering Song: "On a Mission" by Bernardo Cossentino, Julie Lafontaine

(See the Music Recommendations page for more information about this song.)

Begin with the Sign of the Cross, and introduce the prayer with these or similar words:

*We have been called to be families on a mission. Our mission is to serve Jesus by serving others. We will grow and change in wonderful ways as we serve God's people over the next few days. An important question we will ask throughout the coming days is, "Who is serving whom?" We often think we are serving the poor, but our faith teaches us that the poor serve us in surprising ways when we open our hearts to them.*

### Slide 3

*Blessed Mother Teresa was a simple woman who lived in India and served the poorest people in a city called Calcutta. She once said, "Whoever the poorest of the poor are, they are Christ for us – Christ under the guise of human suffering." We often think of ourselves as the ones who are bringing the gift of Christ to the poor, but maybe there's another way to think about this. Maybe they are showing us what Christ is like.*

### Slide 4

*Dorothy Day was an American woman who spent her life serving the poor in New York City. She was very good at creating a welcoming place in her home for other people who did not have homes. She once said, "I firmly believe that our salvation depends on the poor."*

*Have you ever thought that we are saved by those who need us?*

### **Scripture Re-telling:**

*I'm going to summarize and combine a couple of passages from the Gospel of Matthew, and I'll need your help as we show the meaning of these Scripture passages.*

Invite the oldest child/teen to come forward and play the part of Jesus.

*Our first passage is from Matthew 19. Little children came to Jesus to be blessed by him and to ask for his prayers.*

Invite all the young children to come forward. Instruct them to surround Jesus and tell Jesus to put his hands on the heads of the children in a gesture of blessing.

*Jesus' disciples tried to get rid of the children, but Jesus said...*

Stand behind Jesus and tell him to make hand and arm motions as you speak the next line.

*"Let the children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs."*

*The kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are like children: weak (at least in the eyes of some), dependent, and vulnerable.*

*Our next passage is from Matthew 25. It's the parable about the sheep and the goats. Guess who gets to be the sheep! The little children are the sheep.*

Invite the children to face their parents and offer the sweetest smiles they can imagine. Move the children so that they are standing on the right side of Jesus. Prepare to set up this next part with a sense of humor, and emphasize that the goats in this parable re-telling will play a very important teaching role for us.

*I'm going to have to ask the adults and older teens to trust me with this next part. As you may know, this parable includes a group of characters who are goats, and if there are "good guys" and "bad guys" in the story, the "bad guys" would be the goats. But let me assure you that we're going to bring out the best in the goats as we re-tell this parable, and we're certainly not suggesting that our parents and teens are bad guys. But, for the sake of theater, someone has to be the goats, and guess who that is! The parents and older teens are the goats!*

Arrange the older teens and parents on the left side of Jesus.

*As I mentioned before, the goats don't do so well in this parable from Matthew's Gospel. If you recall, they refused to offer service to people who were hungry, thirsty, lonely, naked, sick, and in prison. Jesus said that when they refused to help these people, they were actually refusing to help him. The good news is that they don't have to refuse to help. And these goats (point to parents and teens) are good goats who are willing to serve and help Jesus by serving and helping others who are hungry, thirsty, lonely, naked, sick, and in prison.*

*The parable of the sheep and the goats makes one very simple and very important point: Jesus is available to us especially when we care for the weakest, most vulnerable, and most dependent members of our community. If we fail to care for them, it's as if we are refusing to care for Jesus himself.*

*So here is our challenge:*

Point to the goats.

*Those who are strong among us find Jesus by caring for those who are weak, dependent, and vulnerable.*

Point to the sheep.

*Those who are weak, dependent, and vulnerable aren't as weak as they appear. They are really very strong. In fact, they have the strength of God in them. They have within them the power to save the goats if the goats open their hearts and eyes and hands to acts of service which is exactly what all of us have been doing all our lives and will continue to do in a special way this week.*

*It is sad that the goats in the parable couldn't see how important it is to serve others, but it is wonderful that we have all of you here to be families on a mission, families who know that it is important to serve others, especially those who are poorest and most vulnerable in our community. Thank you for helping me show and tell about these gospel passages.*

### **Blessing and Closing**

Call each family forward one-by-one to place their poster near the prayer space. Bless each family with the following words:

*We pray that the hand of God will bless and protect the \_\_\_\_\_ family. May the gifts you expressed in your poster be transformed through acts of Christian service. May you become a family on a mission.*

All: We pray for and bless the \_\_\_\_\_ family.

Close the prayer by gathering in a circle, joining hands, and praying the Our Father.

SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE

## **Introduction to Families on a Mission (20 minutes)**

Make sure you have read the full introduction to *Families on a Mission* provided in this manual. It is designed to give you a clear understanding of the foundations for this program.

Use these or similar words to introduce the participants to *Families on a Mission*:

*I am really excited to welcome all of you to Families on a Mission (FOAM). Over the next three days, you're going to meet new friends both here in the parish and in our community. You will be amazed at how much fun you'll have sharing the joy of service and learning lots of great new things about yourselves and others.*

*You may not have thought about this much, but you've been families of service for a long time already. Service isn't just something that you put on your calendar every once in a while; it's a lifestyle for those of us who care about each other. Every person in this room learned the value of being served as one of the first lessons of your life as a baby. Someone fed you, someone gave you something to drink when you were thirsty, someone bathed and clothed you... those are just a few ways you experienced the value of service even before you could think about it. You were served because you were loved, and I'll bet you continue to receive lots of service because you are still loved. Families and service go hand in hand.*

*Because we were loved, and because we were served, we also desire to show our love for others and serve them. Service is just a part of who we are.*

*Another wonderful thing about service is that when we serve, we receive something great in return. The people we serve teach us wonderful lessons about gratitude, humility, and interdependence. We learn to be thankful, we learn to be humble, and we learn to be connected to others by our service. Your parents learned those lessons by serving you. We're going to learn those lessons in a new way by serving people who aren't our family members, but we are going to serve them with our families because it is with our families that we learn the most about the meaning of service.*

*So I have a challenge for you. As you offer service to, and are served by, people you haven't met yet, consider this question... How can you share with them the blessings of service you have experienced in your families? We serve family members often without thinking. Can we find ways to meet the needs of others in a similar way? Can we think of the people we will meet over the next few days as brothers and sisters to us because they are children of God as we are? This week we will share the blessings of family service with others and extend our families a little bit to include those who need our love.*

## **Introduce the Service Sites**

Keep all the participants together to hear some highlights about each service site. It is important to keep the service site descriptions brief... only a few minutes per site. It would be helpful to prepare a handout with all the sites listed for the families to review as you are introducing the sites.

If representatives from the service organizations can be present, encourage them to share their information but to focus on being personable with the families rather than overwhelming them with facts and statistics. Stories about what they do will be more effective. Consider the following outline of what needs to be covered in the presentation:

- Explain the Service Sites
  - Introduce the site representatives if they are present
  - Site representatives briefly cover the following:
    - Site mission/purpose
    - Site clients
    - Work to be done
    - Confidentiality
- Remind families about which site they will attend (discernment with families and matching will have happened ahead of time).
- How will families travel to and from the sites?
- Conclude this section by summarizing things families will need to do to get ready for tomorrow (see below).

### **Family Huddles (15 minutes)**

Families function better when they plan together. This part of the program gives them time to discuss what they need to do this evening and tomorrow morning in order to be ready to go when the program starts. Use these or similar words to introduce the planning process:

*One of the goals of Families on a Mission is to help you learn some skills that will strengthen your family. There are specific things families can do to build strength as a family unit. We've been doing many of them already: praying together, serving together, eating together, and having meaningful conversations.*

*Planning is one way to have a meaningful conversation. A wise person once said, "It is always better to have a plan than not to have a plan." So we would like to offer you a little family time to "huddle-up" and think about the things that must happen between now and tomorrow morning in order for your family to be ready to go when you arrive at 8:30 tomorrow morning.*

#### Slide 5

Give each family time to form a huddle and prep for the morning. In their huddles the families should discuss the following items:

- Share what is exciting and hopeful about tomorrow
- Parents address kids' questions/concerns
- Talk about what has to happen this evening and tomorrow in order to get out the door in the morning in time to be here at 8:30 AM:
  - Evening chores
  - Wake-up time
  - Clothing
  - Breakfast (snacks will be provided at church)
  - Packed lunch



- Supplies
- Attitude check

Give the families about five minutes to complete their plans. Move among the families to assist with any questions or concerns.

When the families are finished, encourage them to stick to whatever it is they agreed upon in their plans. Let them know that if this plan doesn't work perfectly, they will have another opportunity to develop a modified plan tomorrow for the second day of service.

### **Dismiss (5 minutes)**

When the families have their final preparations completed, gather them back together for the closing song.

Recommended Song: "Never Too Young" by Carey Landry

Field questions, affirm their participation, and say goodnight.

# Handout 1: Table Runner Diagram

Handprints will go in this space.	Day 1 family symbols will go in this space.	Handprints will go in this space.
	Day 2 family symbols will go in this space.	
	Day 3 family symbols will go in this space.	



# Families on a Mission

A family service and mission experience for your parish

## Day 1

### Holding Hands: We Serve Together Service Learning Session

*The experience of Christian service is a communal experience. I serve, not by or for myself, but with hands grasped in partnership with God, my family, my parish, my community (service agencies), and with those in need. Today's session will encourage participants to serve together with others.*

**Scripture for the Day: Acts 2:44-47**

### Supplies & Preparation

#### Morning Send-off

- Morning refreshments
- Sign-in sheets
- Work site rosters
- Tables/chairs
- Icebreaker supplies (See Part 1 for icebreaker details)
- Assign someone to take a photo of each participant doing service at the site (photos will be used for one of the craft activities on Day 2)

#### Afternoon Session

- Simple snack to share when families return from service sites
- Computer and video projector for PowerPoint slides
- Blindfolds for approximately one-third of your participants
- Copies of the *What Did You Expect?* photos (about one copy of each photo for every ten participants; for example, if you have twenty participants, copy each photo twice) Photos are at the end of this session outline.
- Blank white printer paper (one sheet per family)
- Crayons or markers
- Fabric paint and various-sized paint brushes

## Session at a Glance

### Part 1: The Morning Send-Off (30 minutes)

- Gathering: Conversation/Icebreakers/Activities
- Opening Activity: *Lean On Me* Line Dance
- Introduce the Theme for the Day
- Dismiss the participants to their service sites
- Assign someone to take a photo of each participant doing service at the site (photos will be used for one of the craft activities on Day 2)

### Part 2: Gathering back at the Parish (15 minutes)

Gathering/Conversation/Light snack

### Part 3: Remember the Day (15 minutes)

Journaling and Discussion

### Part 4: Connect to the Theme

- Human Knot Activity (20 minutes)
- What Did You Expect? (45 minutes)
- Symbols for the Table Runners (45 minutes)

### Part 5: Family Huddles (10 minutes)

### Part 6: Dinner (30 minutes)

### Part 7: Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

## Part 1: The Morning Send-Off (30 minutes)

### Gathering

#### Prepare a Place

Prepare a welcoming and comfortable environment for the arriving families as you did for the orientation session.

#### Icebreakers/Activities

See the Icebreaker section of the Director's Manual for a selection of activities, games, and icebreakers that can be used during this time each day and throughout the program when you need to fill some time or create an informal atmosphere.

### Gathering Activity

#### Lean on Me Line Dance

Find video instructions on how to do the line dance on the download page or at <https://vimeo.com/572073797/b9717d50ba>.

### Today's Theme

Use these or similar words to introduce the theme for the day:

*Welcome to the first full day of Families on a Mission. The theme for today is "Holding Hands: We Serve Together." Christians never serve alone. Think about that. Even when you serve someone by yourself, like washing the car, you don't do it alone because Jesus serves in you and connects you to many other people. Christ connects you with the people who taught you how to wash a car. They are with you spiritually even if you are washing the car by yourself. You don't serve alone. Christ connects you to the person who receives your service, the owner of the car. Your service is a gift to that person and connects you to that person in a special way. When the car owner receives your service gratefully, his/her gratitude brings joy to your life. The two of you are spiritually connected by your service. You don't serve alone. You also are part of a worldwide community of people that values serving others. Your act of service automatically makes you a "member" of that community. You don't serve alone. We always serve connected to others as if our hands are always spiritually joined. We serve together.*

*Today you will serve others (mention specifically the clients at the service sites). If we are to serve together in a spirit of Christian unity, then we have to think of them as equal in dignity to ourselves. "Equal in dignity" means that we all have the same value in God's eyes. No one is better than anyone else. They are children of God in the same way that we are children of God. A traditional way in our culture to show that we honor the dignity of another person is to shake hands when we meet.*

*One would think that shaking hands is an easy thing to do, but many things can go wrong during a handshake. Here is a descriptive list of what can go wrong during a handshake:*

- The Dead Fish
- The Feather Grip
- The Death Grip

- *Eyeball to Eyeball (acceptable in some cultures)*
- *Never Let Me Go*
- *Twist and Shout*

Briefly describe each handshake style, and invite the participants to try them with a partner or two. This can be a lot of fun if you really ham it up. One way to make this more effective would be to prepare a couple of teens to help you demonstrate each handshake. They could come up with some creative and very funny ways to do the handshakes. Here are the descriptions:

- **Dead fish:** Shaking a person's hand without applying any noticeable grip
- **Feather grip:** Holding the other's hand with only three fingers and thumb
- **Death grip:** Squeezing the life out of your partner's hand (be careful with this one)
- **Eyeball to eyeball:** Stepping in so close to your partner that your blinking eyelashes could scratch the itch on your partner's face
- **Never let me go:** Shaking your partner's hand endlessly
- **Twist and turn:** Squeezing and turning your partner's hand while shouting at an elevated decibel level, "Pleased to meet you!"

Use these or similar words to transition to the next part of the activity:

*I would like to ask the parents for a little help because they have been shaking hands for a long, long time, and they have probably gained some wisdom about what makes a pleasant and honorable handshake.*

Invite the parents to offer suggestions about the characteristics of a good handshake. You'll be looking for the following:

- Eye contact (not literally, of course)
- Firm, but gentle, grip
- A friendly greeting
- Use of your partner's name after hearing it (this tip will help you remember the person's name)

After you have the essential characteristics of a good handshake, invite the parents to teach the skill to their children and to practice it with them.

Close this activity with these or similar words:

*Here is your challenge for today! Our goal for this handshaking course is to prepare you to respect the dignity of the people you will meet today. A nice greeting with a good handshake will help them know that you believe God loves them as much as God loves you. When you meet someone new today, shake hands with a firm and gentle grip, make eye contact, share your name, and state his/her name in your greeting.*

*When you greet new people today, believe that they are equal to you in dignity. As you serve them, they will also serve you. Also, do not judge a person if they don't shake your hand the*

*way we learned this morning. Remember, it was only hours ago that you may not have thought about the meaning of a handshake.*

*Finally, know that you are a gift to the people you meet today. We are honored and deeply grateful that you are representing our parish.*

Review the materials you covered during the orientation session that families need to know for today, such as...

- How they are traveling to and from the work site
- Policies and procedures specific to each work site
- Work Site Rosters
- Supplies
- Lunch
- Departure time from work site

Also remind participants that someone will be taking a photo of them while they are serving today. The photos will be necessary for an activity on Day 2.

## Part 2: Gathering Back at the Parish (15 minutes)

### Slide 1

Create an atmosphere of welcome as the families return to the parish by greeting each person by name as they arrive.

People will need time to wash up and relax after a long day of work.

Encourage informal conversation by gathering and sharing a simple snack. Ask questions about their day of service. Affirm the good work they've done. Make sure that someone on the team checks in with each family and with each individual so that everyone feels a warm sense of welcome upon their return. Review the guidelines for good conversation from the orientation session.

Some participants may feel that they didn't do enough. This is a common feeling for those who participate in service experiences. Others will be energized by an accomplishment or a new relationship. Some will be surprised by what they saw or learned. Others will feel sad for the misfortune that people suffer. Finally, some will be impressed by the joy and resiliency of people in the midst of struggles. Whatever they report as their experience, it will be important for you to remind the participants that their personal presence to those they serve is even more important than the work that they do.

Christian service is first and foremost an encounter with Christ who is present both in the servant and in the one being served. Being open to that personal encounter is critical to effective Christian service. Each person is a unique expression of Christ's presence in the world. You can help the participants to look more deeply for the one-of-a-kind gift of Christ that is in each person they met today. This mode of conversation will prime the participants for the first formal discussion, *Remember the Day*.



### Part 3: Remember the Day (15 minutes)

Gather the participants together and break them into family groups with two or three families per group.

Use these or similar words to introduce this discussion:

*We've all had a busy and productive day serving our sisters and brothers in need and being served by them. We're going to take a few minutes to think about the things we saw, touched, smelled, tasted, felt, and heard today.*

Distribute the participant journals (one per person) and a pen/pencil.

#### Slide 2

##### Journal Page 2

Give each person time to write in the journal at least one response to the questions on the second PowerPoint slide. Here are the questions:

- What happened today that was...
  - Funny?
  - Interesting?
  - Surprising?
  - Wonderful?
- How did you serve others?
- How were you served by others?

Let them know that they don't have to answer every question. Tell them to go with the question that generates energy for them. (Remind parents or older siblings to help younger children with their journal questions. Younger children may draw pictures to express their thoughts and memories about their service today.)

When they are finished journaling, invite them to share something about what they wrote in their journals with their small group.

If there is time, you may invite a few participants to share something that they believe would benefit the whole group.

Close with these or similar words:

*It is good to think about our experiences and talk about them with others. It helps us to learn from them. We'll do this each day, so tomorrow you might think about the things you will want to share while you are at your service sites.*

*Now we will explore today's theme, **Holding Hands: We Serve Together**, and we'll start with a game.*

## Part 4: Connect to the Theme

### Human Knot Activity (20 minutes)

#### Slide 3

Use these or similar words to introduce the Human Knot game:

**Holding Hands: We Serve Together** is our theme for the day, so we are going to begin with a holding hands game that will challenge us to serve each other as we play. One of the things we learn when we play group games is that it is fun and interesting to do things with other people rather than do things alone. Sometimes we might be able to get things done more quickly when we do them by ourselves, but when we're thrown together with a group of people, life can become a lot more fun.

*This game will challenge you to work with each other, and some of you are going to be very different from the others based upon how we are going to set up the game.*

#### **Playing the Game**

Instruct participants to engage in the human knot activity according to the following instructions:

- Arrange groups of eight or ten participants in a circle.
- Tell approximately every third person in the group that he/she cannot speak during the activity.
- Blindfold approximately every third person in the group. Do not blindfold a person who will not be speaking.
- This will leave about a third of the group without a "disability."
- Instruct participants to raise their right hands in the air and to grasp the right hand of a person *not* standing next to them.
- Instruct participants to raise their left hands in the air and to grasp the left hand of a person *not* standing next to them and one with whom they are not already connected with their right hands.
- Without releasing their hands, they must untangle this knot and form a circle. At the end of this activity, some will be facing into the center of the circle while others will be facing away from the center of the circle.

#### **Post-Game Discussion**

Use these or similar questions to engage the participants in a discussion about the human knot activity:

- *How many of you enjoyed the human knot game?*
- *How did those who were blindfolded feel during the activity? What did you learn?*
- *How did those who were not permitted to speak feel during the activity? What did you learn?*
- *How did the rest of you feel, and what did you learn?*

- *It is really hard to untangle the knot when you are all holding hands, but that is also what made it so much fun and so interesting. Why do you think working together on a project can be so great?*
- *I imagine you could have made a circle a lot faster if you would have been allowed to let go of your hands, but would that have been as interesting or as fun?*

Conclude this discussion with these or similar words:

*Can someone tell us what our theme is today? **Holding Hands: We Serve Together.** This is our Families on a Mission theme for today. As we learned from the human knot game, we can have a great time when we grasp hands with others and work on a project together. The work that we do, the service that we provide, is more interesting and more enjoyable when we do it with each other. By "each other" I mean with our families, with the people whom we serve, and with God.*

*All these people joining hands to do God's work is a wonderful thing. It might be easier to find one person with a lot of money to get the work done quickly, but I think it pleases God when we all help out in any way we can.*

## What Did You Expect? (45 minutes)

Families will do this activity together. They will need some table space.

Introduce this activity with these or similar words:

*Another wonderful thing that happens when we serve others together is that we are often surprised by what we discover. Things aren't always what we expect them to be. We tend to find more good things in people if we take time to look more carefully. Sometimes you have to dig to get to the treasure.*

*We have some old sayings in our language that capture this idea that there are wonderful surprises beneath the surface of things:*

- *"You don't always get what you expect."*
- *"Don't judge a book by its cover."*
- *"There's more to this than meets the eye."*

*I want to show you a picture, and then I'll tell you a story about the picture that might surprise you.*

### Slide 4

*There once was a man named Fred who had an itchy head. His head itched so much that he came up with some creative ways to scratch his itch.*

*Fred bought a back scratcher to scratch his head. That didn't work. He rubbed his head on trees. The city park rangers chased him out of the parks because he was damaging the trees with all of his rubbing, so that didn't work either. He even bought a pet porcupine, thinking that he could snuggle with it while he slept at night, but the porcupine didn't like this idea so he ran away.*

*Finally, Fred became desperate and did what he should have done in the beginning. He talked to his best friend, Ned. Ned was a big man who wore big shoes. He especially liked to wear shoes with sand paper glued to the bottom of them so that he would not slip and fall when he walked on the ice in the winter time. You see, Ned was so big that one poorly timed and poorly placed fall on a patch of hard ice could really get him in big trouble. The sand paper glued to the bottom of his shoes worked perfectly to keep him vertical... that means standing upright instead of falling down.*

*So Fred and Ned were having lunch one day, and Fred was complaining about his itchy head and asking for advice. Ned said to Fred, "I think I have the med for your itchy head, Fred. Lie down on the floor."*

*Fred was a little hesitant, but Fred trusted his friend, Ned, so, like playing dead, Fred put his head, not on the table, but on the floor, instead.*

*And then the magic happened. Ned took his large shoe with the sandpaper glued to the bottom and stepped right on Fred's itchy head. He stepped down hard and began rubbing his heavy foot all over Fred's head, and Fred moaned with pleasure!*

*The itch on the head of Fred was now dead, thanks to his good friend, Ned.*

The End!

Continue with these or similar words:

*I have a question for you. What did you expect the story to be about when you first saw the picture on the slide?*

Invite a few responses.

*I'm sure you could imagine lots of other stories that would make sense with this picture. My story was about itchy heads and big feet and good friendship, and it's clear from your responses that many of you were not expecting those themes to come out of a story about that picture!*

*Think about the service you did today. You served, hand-in-hand with your family members, with your fellow parishioners, and with people from your service sites. When we join hands in service, we often experience unexpected things. What happened today that you didn't expect at first? Maybe it happened here. Maybe it happened at your service site. For example, maybe you showed up at your site, and you saw someone and imagined that you knew exactly what that person would be like. But as you got to know this person your opinion changed. You discovered something unexpected.*

*Another possibility is that you thought this program was going to be one way, but something happened that you wouldn't have expected. Did that happen to you?*

*Another possibility is that you may have surprised yourself with your great handshaking skills. Maybe you were surprised at how confident you could be when meeting new people, and you discovered that you are better at making new friends than you thought. Did that happen to you?*

Spread out the hand pictures on a table. Invite the participants (smaller children may stay with their parents for this activity) to browse the photos until they find one that expresses something about the following two points:

1. Today, I was surprised by...
2. Today, my heart was touched by...
3. Because of what surprised me, I feel this way...

### Journal Page 3

Encourage each person to jot down a few notes or draw a picture in their journal that will help each of them to share a story about being surprised or moved.

After about ten minutes, divide the participants into intergenerational groups of 4-6 participants. Each person is invited to share his/her story in the following way:

1. Go to the table with the photos and select the photo that connects with your story. If the photo you want is being used by someone else, you can let another person in your group go before you.
2. Share your story based upon what you wrote in your journal, and connect your story to the photo.
3. When you are finished, return your photo to the table.

After all the participants have had a chance to share their stories, conclude this activity with these or similar words:

*When people join hands, they are connected. When our hands are joined, we are showing that we love each other and we care about each other. Our stories showed how we are all feeling a little more connected today through our service. Hands are a sign that we are made to be connected to each other in loving relationships. And we serve each other because we love each other. My hand reached out to you means both that I am willing to take care of you, and I am willing to let you take care of me.*

### **Scripture Connection**

Make the connection between the activity and today's Scripture using these or similar words:

*When people work together to take care of each other, we say that they are working "hand-in-hand." Hand-in-hand is a beautiful phrase. It reminds us that we are not alone. We live and serve and love in a caring community. Today's Bible reading is a description of how the first Christians lived hand-in-hand. They shared the work of their hands with each other. They reached out to each other and took care of each other so that no one ever went hungry or thirsty or without enough clothes or a place to live. Listen to this description from the Bible of what it means to be connected by living and serving hand-in-hand.*

Read Acts 2:44-45 slowly.

### Slide 5

### Journal Page 3 (Scripture Connection)

Invite the participants to reflect upon the following questions that can be found in their journals and share their responses in their small groups:

*What did you hear in the stories we told that remind you of how the early Christians lived hand-in-hand?*

*How are we living and serving this week, hand-in-hand, like the early Christians?*

*Why is it important for Christians to serve hand-in-hand, rather than alone?*

After the groups are finished responding to the questions, invite representatives from each group to summarize key insights from the discussion.

## **Symbols for the Table Runners (45 minutes)**

Use these or similar words to introduce this activity:

*Now we will summarize our experiences of the day and add them to our Table Runners with a special symbol created by each family.*

Distribute paper and crayons to each family. Invite them to reflect upon the questions on the PowerPoint slide and develop a symbol after their discussion. They will first develop their symbols on the paper, and then they will paint the same symbol on the Table Runner in the space provided for Day 1 symbols.

### Slide 6

After all the families have added their symbols to their Table Runners, gather them back together to make preparations for tomorrow.

## Part 5: Family Huddles (10 minutes)

**Note:** Because they developed their plans at the orientation, families may huddle to do a quick check-in rather than a full plan.

Families function better when they plan together. This part of the program gives them time to discuss what they need to do this evening and tomorrow morning in order to be ready to go when the program starts tomorrow. Use these or similar words to introduce the planning process:

*One of the goals of Families on a Mission is to help you learn some skills that will strengthen your family. There are certain specific things families can do to build strength as a family unit. We've been doing many of them already: praying together, serving together, eating together, and having meaningful conversations.*

*Planning is one way to have a meaningful conversation. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry once said, "A goal without a plan is just a wish." So we would like to offer you a little family time to think about the things that must happen between now and tomorrow morning in order for your family to achieve the goal of being ready to go when you arrive at 8:30 tomorrow morning.*

### Slide 7

Give each family time to form a huddle and prep for the morning. In their huddles the families should discuss the following items:

- Share what is exciting and hopeful about tomorrow
- Parents address kids' questions/concerns
- Talk about what has to happen this evening and tomorrow in order to get out the door in the morning in time to be here at 8:30 AM:
  - Evening chores
  - Wake-up time
  - Clothing
  - Breakfast (snacks will be provided at church)
  - Packed lunch
  - Supplies
  - Attitude check

Give the families about five minutes to complete their plans. Move among the families to assist with any questions or concerns.

When the families are finished, encourage them to stick to whatever it is they agreed upon in their plans. Let them know that if this plan doesn't work perfectly, they will have another opportunity to develop a modified plan tomorrow for the final day of service.



## Part 6: Dinner (30 minutes)

Offer the following mealtime prayer before the food team serves the meal:

*Let us pray. Generous God, you give us an abundance of food from the earth to share with each other. May the food and the bonds of family and friendship give us the energy we need to serve you and your people. We offer this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Another option for the meal prayer could be to have a fun song prayer. Here is a link to a website that has lots of fun ways to pray before a meal:

[http://www.campingdude.com/grace\\_search.asp](http://www.campingdude.com/grace_search.asp)

SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE

## Part 7: Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

When the meal is finished, gather all the participants in a circle around the display of Table Runners. Invite them to join hands as you lead them in the following prayer to close the day: (Option – the participants can put their hands on their handprints for the opening part of the prayer up to the Scripture reading.)

*As our day draws to a close, we look back with gratitude upon all that our hands accomplished together. We are thankful for the happy moments and thankful for the challenges which will help us to grow. Let us pause silently and thank God in our hearts for being together with each other, with the people who received our service, and with the people who work at our service sites.*

Recommended Song: “We Are One Body” by Dana Scallon

Option: Sing the refrain as a group, and prepare one person to read the verses with instrumental music in the background.

Pause before saying:

*We truly are one body in Christ, and we do not serve alone. Let us pause and think gratefully about the people we served today and the people who served us today.*

*I invite each one of you to say the name of one person who touched your heart today.*

Pause and allow for the names to be spoken.

*And now I invite you to listen one more time to today’s passage from the Bible, but this time we will hear the next line too. The next line assures us that after they gave away their possessions for others, they were not empty. They were filled with gladness.*

Reader: Acts 2:44-47

*The gifts we share and the service we do as a Church bring us great gladness. Listen carefully as we hear this simple reflection on the many meanings of Church.*

*Think of the words and images that describe “church” for you. Which of the following descriptions might you use?*

- *a place where we worship*
- *the pope, bishops, and priests*
- *a social organization*
- *people who care about one another*
- *people who pray and worship together*
- *people who serve the needs of others*
- *people who teach the good news of Jesus*
- *a community who believes in Jesus Christ and does his work today*
- *other?*

*The first Christians teach us that we are church – a people gathered together by the risen Christ to share what we have, serve the needs of the world, pray and worship God, share the good news, and continue Jesus' mission in the world. How do you see this in the church today? How can your family be the church to those around you?*

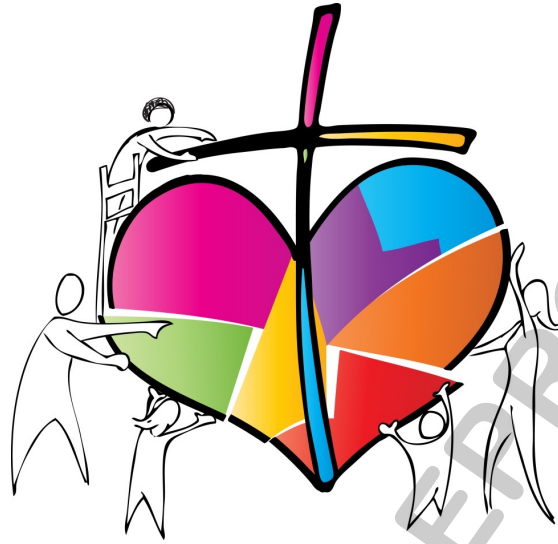
Invite all to join hands as you pray:

*Lord, we thank you for the gift of holding hands, a sign of our unity and our service together. May the service that we offer heal the broken hearts of your world as it brings gladness to our own hearts. We offer this prayer through Christ our Lord, who carries it in his hands to your heart. Amen*

Thank all for their good work and wish them a restful night. Remind them of the gathering time for tomorrow and to follow their plans from the family huddles.

8. "Witnesses" by Paul Hillebrand, *Never Too Young*, OCP  
This song is not available as a single download, but your parish may have access to the music. Check with your parish musician if you want to use it. You can also get it by purchasing the CD, *Never Too Young*-disc 12, from [www.ocp.org](http://www.ocp.org).
9. "Never Too Young" by Carey Landry, *Never Too Young*, OCP  
Visit the webpage below for the lyrics and for ordering information (CD and the sheet music) <https://ocp.org/en-us/songs/76174/never-too-young>
10. "We Will Follow" by Ken Canedo, Jesse Manibusan, Dan Brennan, *Love Never Fails*, OCP
11. "Faces of Our Friends" by Sarah Hart, Celia Whitler, *Obvious*, OCP
12. "Lean On Me" by Club Nouveau  
Find video instructions on how to do the line dance on the download page or at <https://vimeo.com/572073797/b9717d50ba>.
13. "Clap Your Hands" by They Might Be Giants  
This song is an easy icebreaker to get families moving in the morning.

# Families on a Mission



## Holding Hands: We Serve Together

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1

## Remembering the Day...

- What happened today that was...
  - Funny?
  - Interesting?
  - Surprising?
  - Wonderful?

 **Pick one!**

- How did you serve others?
- How were you served by others?



2

# Human Knot



3



4

## Acts 2:44-45

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. (NRSV)

- What did you hear in the stories we told that remind you of how the early Christians lived hand-in-hand?
- How are we living and serving this week, hand-in-hand, like the early Christians?
- Why is it important for Christians to serve hand-in-hand, rather than alone?

5

## Creating a Symbol for Day 1

- Name lots of things that happened today from this morning until now.
- Which of the things that happened today do you treasure the most? (Each family member choose one.)
- Create a colorful symbol which depicts in some way the things your family treasures from today.



6

# Family Huddle

- Share what is exciting and hopeful about tomorrow
- Parents address kids' questions/concerns
- Talk about what has to happen this evening and tomorrow in order to get out the door in the morning in time to be here at 8:30 AM
  - Evening chores
  - Wake-up time
  - Clothing
  - Breakfast (snacks will be provided at church)
  - Packed lunch
  - Supplies
  - Attitude check





*A Family Service and Mission Experience for Your Parish*

*Hands in Service*

Participant Journal

## Day 1: Holding Hands—We Serve Together

*I serve, not by or for myself, but with hands grasped in partnership with God, my family, my parish, my community, and with those in need.*

**Scripture for the Day: Acts 2:44-47**



### Remembering the Day

What happened today that was...

Funny?

Interesting?

Surprising?

Wonderful?

How did you serve others?

How were you served by others?

“We are called to reach out and to build relationships of love and justice.”  
-from *Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*

### **What did you Expect?**

Today, I was surprised by...

Today, my heart was touched by...

Because of what surprised me, I feel this way...

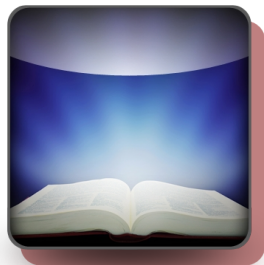
### **Scripture Connection**

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. (Acts 2:44-45 NRSV)

What did you hear in the stories we told that reminds you of how the early Christians lived hand-in-hand?

How are we living and serving this week, hand-in-hand, like the early Christians?

Why is it important for Christians to serve hand-in-hand?



## Day 2: Holy Hands—Jesus Serves through Us

*Our ability to serve in itself is a gift from Jesus, which comes to us through the Church.*

### Scripture for the Day: 1 Peter 4:11



### Remembering the Day

What happened today that was...

Funny?

Interesting?

Surprising?

Wonderful?

What was holy about your service today?

How did Jesus serve through you today?

Jesus identifies himself with those in need, with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison. "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). Love of God and love of neighbor have become one: in the least of the brethren we find Jesus himself, and in Jesus we find God. -from Deus Caritas Est, Pope Benedict XVI

Day 3: Healing Hands—Service Gives New Life to Our Community  
*Service makes a difference by healing our community and bringing new life.*

**Scripture for the Day:**  
**Matthew 8:14-17**



### **Remembering the Day**

It happened today that was...

Funny?

Interesting?

Surprising?

Wonderful?

How did you see healing happening today?



**Matthew 8:14-17**

Record your thoughts in words or pictures in the boxes below as you listen to the reading.



- Describe the healing you heard about in the reading.
- How were hands being used in the story?  
    Why do you think they were mentioned?
- What did the reading say about words?
- What does this reading teach you about service?
- How are healing, hands, words, and service related?

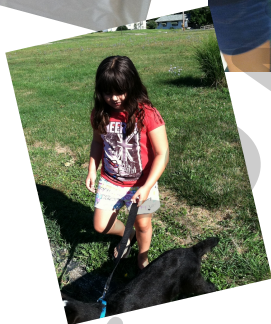
<b>Healing</b>	<b>Words</b>
<b>Hands</b>	<b>Service</b>

Thoughts...



The family is indeed sacred: it is the place in which life—the gift of God—can be properly welcomed and protected... the family is the heart of the culture of life.

-from Centesimus Annus, Pope John Paul II



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