



A Family Service and Mission Experience for Your Parish

Our Common Home Caring For God's Creation

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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 two days of service immersion and service learning. A closing liturgy can happen on the day of service or on the day after the service. 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 two 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 second day of service is similar to the first 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 projects which have been prepared over the 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* with instructions on how to use the Bible 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. We strongly suggest creating a #hashtag so families can upload videos and pictures! Use this site as a resource:

<http://www.adweek.com/socialtimes/create-hashtag/502080>

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 2 ½ consecutive days, 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 Design Totes (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 two 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 two 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
- 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

- Activity (20 minutes)
- What Did you Expect? (45 minutes)
- Recycled Planters (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
- 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

- Bringing It Home (30 minutes)

Part 5: General Sharing (30 minutes)

Part 6: Closing Liturgy (45 minutes)

Part 7: Dinner and Celebration

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 two days. The closing liturgy now becomes a Saturday vigil liturgy, and will need to be planned differently from the one included in the kit.

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 the two days of service on the Saturday and Sunday following the orientation, ending with a Sunday evening liturgy.

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.



A Family Service and Mission Experience for Your Parish

Program Theme

Our Common Home: Caring for God's Creation

Orientation:

Genesis 1 – a look at all God created and the challenge to care for it.

“Without repeating the entire theology of creation, we can ask what the great biblical narratives say about the relationship of human beings with the world. In the first creation account in the Book of Genesis, God’s plan includes creating humanity. After the creation of man and woman, ‘God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good’ (Gn 1:31). The Bible teaches that every man and woman is created out of love and made in God’s image and likeness (cf. Gn 1:26).” (*Laudato Si'*, 65)

Day 1 Green is Good!

Reflection

“Our insistence that each human being is an image of God should not make us overlook the fact that each creature has its own purpose. None is superfluous. The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains; everything is, as it were, a caress of God.” (*Laudato Si'*, 84)

Psalms 24:1-2 The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for God has founded it on the seas and established it on the rivers.

Your reflections on the theme...

Day 2 Called to Care for the Earth

Reflection

“The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. At the global level, it is a complex system linked to many of the essential conditions for human life. (*Laudato Si'*, 23)

Psalm 104:14-21 You cause the grass to grow for the cattle, and plants for people to use, to bring forth food from the earth, and wine to gladden the human heart, oil to make the face shine, and bread to strengthen the human heart. The trees of the LORD are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted. In them the birds build their nests; the stork has its home in the fir trees. The high mountains are for the wild goats; the rocks are a refuge for the shepherds. You have made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting. You make darkness, and it is night, when all the animals of the forest come creeping out. The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God.

Your reflections on the theme...

Bringing It All Home: Our Commitment to Be Good Stewards

Reflection

“...human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself.” (*Laudato Si'*, 66)

Psalm 104:24-30 O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it. These all look to you to give them their food in due season; when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground.

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 families for participation in the experience of *Families on a Mission*

Supplies and Preparation

Registration

- Team members ready to greet and welcome 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

Reusable totes

- A canvas tote for each person (It is best to put newspapers, plastic, or a tarp under the totes 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

- Tables and chairs for each family
- Poster board (one per family)
- 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
- Plants, pitcher of water, garden tools, globe

Closing

- Song

Session at a Glance

Registration, Refreshments, and Design totes (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)

Gathering Preparation

Display PowerPoint Slide 1.

Prepare a welcoming and comfortable environment for the arriving families.

A welcoming place will include:

- Be ready to go 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.
- 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 reusable tote activity after their names are checked off on your forms.

Reusable Tote

While registration is proceeding, invite participants who are signed in to design and decorate a canvas tote with paint. It will be used over the next two days on the service sites. Families will take them home after the last day of the program. Follow these guidelines:

- Invite the participant to think of a design that reflects the earth, creation, the planet, stars, moon, sun, flowers etc. encourage the creativity!
- Use the paintbrush or fabric paints with tips to paint totes.
- Provide soap, water, and towels for hand washing.

When all participants have designed their bag, gather in the prayer space.

Refreshments

Refreshments will be served during the registration process and while totes are being painted. 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 area as they are painting their totes.

SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE

Welcome and Introductions: Family Posters (30 minutes)

Slide 1

Use these or similar words to welcome the participants:

Welcome to Families on a Mission! 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. Our focus is this incredible gift of planet earth that God has given us. Our prayers and our work will be about how we can care for creation and our community.

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 markers. Your task will be to create a poster that will help other families get to know a little about you and your whole family.

Your family poster should 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 cares for creation – plants, animal, each other etc.*
- 5. Be sure to add immediate family members (parents/siblings) to your poster even if they aren't present today*

Slide 2

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)

Gathering Song: **Everything You** – Jackie Francois, OCP digital downloads or something that is a favorite of your community

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 and to take care of all God has given to us. We will grow and change in wonderful ways as we serve God's people and tend to our amazing earth over the next few days. May our time together be a blessing to each of us and our community. We pray this in the name of God, our loving Creator, amen.

Slide 5

Pope Francis said, "Creation is the order of love. God's love is the fundamental moving force in all created things; "For you love all things that exist, and detest none of the things that you have made; for you would not have made anything had you hated it." (Wisdom 11:24) Every creature is thus the object of the Father's tenderness, who gives it its place in the world. Laudato Si 77

Slide 6

St. Francis of Assisi is the saint that our Pope loves dearly. It is because of his love for all creation – plant, animal, people, the earth and the universe. All of creation is a reflection of God's love. St. Francis also loved peace. He encourage people to live in harmony with each other and with nature. He also believed that we should be an example of this love and peace in the world. "Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary....use words." St. Francis of Assisi

Have you ever thought that God has created the earth, the plants, animals and you for a reason? We each have gifts that will help our world become a better place. With worry today around the changing climate, what gifts do you have that can help? What gifts does your family have?

We will be out in our community doing service for the next two days – we will be caring for creation in some incredible ways. Let's hear and see a little inspiration for our service.

CST 101 Care for God's Creation video

- Have the video of CRS's CST 101 Care for God's Creation queued up. (<https://youtu.be/wSnXuCxiHXE>)

Slide 7

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 have be a blessing to others and our earth as you serve and make a difference. 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, learning about the environment and finding out lots of great new things about yourselves and others.

The theme for our Families on a Mission is "Our Common Home – Caring for God's Creation." Part of being a follower of Jesus is to care for others and be good caretakers of the earth. It is very important to make sure not only people have all they need – food, shelter, clothing and love, but that our planet isn't harmed by pollution, industry, carelessness, and greed. It's up to us to watch out for all God has given us!

Pope Francis wrote a letter to all of us – an encyclical called "Laudato Si – On Care for our Common Home." He encourages us to know and learn about our planet and to do what we can to make sure it lasts for many, many, more years. We have to think of the future – clean water, trees, lots of plants and animals, tiny species of organisms, air and the earth. It is ours to live on – but we have to be gentle with it.

Our work over the next couple of days will be about caring for the earth. And it is a chance for us to find out in our own community what people are doing to make sure we can live healthy and happy lives and how agencies, groups, and people from all walks of life are caring for creation.

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

- 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. We've been doing many of them already: praying together, making things 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 8

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

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, play some music as they head out for the night. Something fun!

Recommended Song: ***Plow Your Row, Steve Angrisano, OCP digital download***

Field questions, affirm their participation, and say goodnight

SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE



Families on a Mission

A family service and mission experience for your parish

Learning Session

Day 1

Green is Good

Service Learning Session

The earth has been given to us to care for and tend – we are called to learn what the COMMON GOOD means and to live in ways that show we take seriously God's gift to us.

Scripture for the Day: Genesis 9:1-3

Supplies & Preparation

Morning Send-off

- Morning refreshments
- Sign-in sheets
- Work site rosters
- Tables/chairs
- Icebreaker supplies (bingo sheets, pencils and a few prizes--environmentally friendly ones!)
- Assign someone to take a photo of each participant doing service at the site (photos will be used for a slide show on the last day).

Afternoon Session

- Simple snack to share when families return from service sites
- Computer and LCD projector for PowerPoint slides
- Markers

Session at a Glance

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

- Gathering: Conversation/Icebreakers/Activities
- Opening Activity
- Introduction of the Theme for the Day
- Dismissal of 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

- Care for God's Creation skit (20 minutes)
- What Did You Expect? (45 minutes)
- Recycled Planters (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

Environment Bingo

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 Green is Good! Today you will serve others and share your gifts at worksites throughout the community at (list agencies). We are blessed with God's creation all around us including all of you!

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

Hand out bingo sheets and pencils, then give instructions.

Walk around the room and find someone who matches one of the boxes below. Have them print their name in that box. When you fill up your card, yell BINGO! (This activity can be done in pairs if you have younger children.)

B	I	N	G	
HAS AT LEAST 2 PETS	IS AN ONLY CHILD	RECYCLES	LIKES TO GARDEN	ALWAYS TURNS OFF LIGHTS
FIRST SERVICE EXPERIENCE	LIKES TO HIKE IN NATURE	USES REUSABLE WATER BOTTLE	HELPS NEIGHBORS WITH YARD WORK	TAKES A QUICK SHOWER
ALWAYS PUTS TRASH IN THE TRASH CAN	HAS DONATED USED CLOTHES	FOAM FREE FOAM	CARPOOLS TO SCHOOL EVENTS	WALKS INSTEAD OF RIDES IN CAR IF POSSIBLE
HAS MEALS THAT ARE MEATLESS	HAS HEARD THE STORY OF CREATION GENESIS 1	CARES FOR ENDANGERED SPECIES OF ANIMALS	DOESN'T LEAVE TECH DEVICES PLUGGED IN WHEN CHARGED	IS CONCERNED ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE
NEVER USES STYROFOAM	REUSES PLASTIC BAGS	KNOWS WHERE THEIR FOOD COMES FROM	SHARES LEFTOVERS INSTEAD OF THROWING AWAY	TURNS WATER OFF WHILE BRUSHING TEETH

Blessing:

Invite families to gather back after the game for a send-off blessing.

Lord, we are grateful for this beautiful day and for all the promise it holds. Give us strength, courage, grace and love today to do the work prepared for us. May we serve with joy and find ways to care for the earth and one another. We pray this in the name of Jesus our brother and friend. Amen.

Okay teams – let's get out there and do some great work! See you back here this afternoon!

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

Slide 10

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!

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 and caring for the earth in some way. 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 11

Journal Page 2

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

- What happened today that was...
 - Funny?
 - Interesting?
 - Surprising?
 - Wonderful?
- How did you care for the earth??

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.

Part 4: Connect to the Theme

Paper Garden (20 minutes)

Slide 12

***Green is Good** is our theme for the day, so we have an activity that will have us making a garden – but each family is responsible for one thing. If we each do our part the end result will be amazing. This activity is about the importance of each person, each small detail and what those do when put all together. We create something special. We really do need one another to be a whole, just like the gardens.*

Making the Garden

Instruct participants to send one person in their family to pick up their supplies.

Instructions:

Every family or group has a paper bag filled with things to make something for our garden. As you see, this empty wall with just some dirt is waiting for things to grow. You have ten minutes to open your bag, look at the picture and create what you see with what you have in your bag. Then, when finished, bring it to the garden and choose a spot to plant it!

Supplies: Have plant pictures printed on construction paper, buttons, shells, pompom balls, fabric, glue sticks, twigs, scissors, and other craft items you can think of. (These should be assembled ahead of time with materials that will help the family create the plant picture/design.)

Post-Activity Discussion

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

- *How many of you enjoyed making your part of the garden?*
- *What did you make?*
- *Was it beautiful or nice all by itself?*
- *What happened when other things were put into the garden?*
- *Why is it important to have so many kinds of plants?*
- *Why is it important for us to learn about plants and gardens?*
- *If you were to make a garden at home, what would you plant?*
- *How would you take care of it?*

Conclude this discussion with these or similar words:

As we learned from the garden activity, there are so many kinds of plants and vegetation that God created. We may never even see, touch or taste even a fraction of those creations. But they are here for our enjoyment, and also for our stewardship or care for them. It's not enough to just enjoy the fruits of someone's hard work in a garden or farm – you and I must know what it is like to care for things and understand how precious all things are. All of life is

a miracle, from the garden snail to a perfect purple eggplant. You and I are precious, too – God has trusted us with taking care of the earth and every living thing. It's a big responsibility, but together we can do it!

SAMPLE - DO NOT REPRODUCE

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."*
- *"There is a good idea in there somewhere!"*

Slide 13

Sometimes things look too difficult to fix. When we think of a drought in Africa, a hurricane in Louisiana, or a flood in Thailand, we often wonder if our little efforts will really help at all. But they do. It takes people like you and me to find ways to solve problems. Our earth is facing problems, which means people will face problems. We have to use our imaginations, our creativity and our courage to try new things and find ways to heal the earth and care for our brothers and sisters. One organization came up with a solution to help families living in areas with little rain to grow enough food to care for their family. Catholic Relief Services helps people make these amazing keyhole gardens. Let's see how it's done.

<http://www.crs.org/resource-center/keyhole-garden>

Continue with these or similar words:

What do you think of the keyhole gardens? Do you think you could make one? Why are they so special?

I'm sure you could imagine lots of other stories and ideas out there that have helped make a difference and changed people's lives.

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.

1. Today, I was surprised by...
2. Today, my heart was touched by...
3. I shared my gifts with...

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 based upon what they wrote or drew in their journal.

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

The good things you did today were a gift to others and to you, too. It feels good to know we are being like Jesus and doing things that will make a difference for the world.

Scripture Connection

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

God created something so incredible and gave it to people to care for. It is a serious responsibility, one we have not taken that way it seems. The earth is in need of some care, love and gentle tending. Let's see what God intended when he created the earth.

Read Genesis 9:1-3. Read it slowly.

Slide 14

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 scripture we told that remind you of how God intended the earth to be?

How are we living and serving this week that would care for the earth – be good stewards of it?

Why is it important for Christians to do this together, rather than alone?

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

Recycled Planters

Slide 15

Supplies:

- Recycled boots, pots, cans, wooden boxes, etc. (you can ask parish families to bring something in for this activity if you do not have access to interesting containers)
- Potting soil
- Edible plants such as basil, oregano, mint, chives
- Permanent markers to write their family name on their little garden
- Gloves
- Watering cans or cups to use to water plant

Use these or similar words to introduce this activity:

The keyhole gardens were an inspiration—and definitely something creative and clever. We have things all around us that we can look at differently – with new eyes—and create something new and wonderful.

Families should pick out a recycled item from the table, choose a plant or two, some potting soil and permanent markers. Once they have their supplies, they should place the potting soil in their container, gently place the plants in the soil, making space for them, bringing the dirt gently up around the plants and then watering them.

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)

Note to leader: It would be great if the meals were farm to table, vegetarian, and simple.

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.

Suggestions for dinner that are farm to table:

1. Food that is locally sourced as much as possible. Vegetables, cheese, meat, fruit
2. Invite a local chef to make a simple soup and salad with fresh ingredients that didn't have to travel too far to their town.
3. Make a meal that is simple, vegetarian or international (see CRS Rice Bowl for ideas)

Part 7: Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

When the meal is finished, gather all the participants in a circle around the display of Recycled Gardens. Invite them to join hands as you lead them in the following prayer to close the day:

As our day draws to a close, we look back with gratitude upon all that we 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 and places we served service, and with the people who work at our service sites everyday

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 have learned that the earth is also connected to us in a very special way. It is our home and we have been called to take care of it and we do not do this alone. Let us pause and think gratefully about how we served today and how our lives were touched.

I invite each one of you to say the name of one person or activity that touched your heart today.

Pause and allow for the names to be spoken.

And now I invite you to listen one more time to the 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 this planet earth and our parish family and our own families. May the service that we offer be a sign of hope to others that the world has a bright future and God has great plans for all that is yet to come. We offer this prayer through Christ our Lord. 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.

Criteria for a Work Site

Work sites should:

- Have a reliable contact person with whom you will interact and make arrangements.
- Have a clear mission of service that meets a real community need and can inspire your parishioners.
- Provide a clear and detailed description of the work needed to be accomplished during the service days.
- Provide an orientation or materials for an orientation that will be given to participants on the first day of the program.
- Provide for interaction and dialogue between program participants and those being served.
- Allow participants, where possible, to work alongside those being served.
- Provide work experiences which are suited to the gifts and abilities of the program participants from your parish.



Site Visits

There must be an opportunity for at least one site visit by the parish leader and others on the parish team before sending any parishioners to the site.

Work Time & Travel Distance

Families will depart the parish between 8:30 and 9:00 am and leave the work site by 2:30 – 3:00 pm. Travel time to a site should generally be kept to less than 30 minutes. A good work site is one that has meaningful work that can be done during this time. Some work sites may include educational programming as a part of their experience. Make sure your site representative knows that you will be offering service learning after the workday so they will focus primarily on worksite orientation and give participants ample time to do their work.



The Work Days

Ideally, all teams will be assigned to a single site. Some exceptions may apply due to workload. The ideal is to have team members at a site long enough to immerse themselves, at least briefly, in a single issue, and to have the opportunity to talk with those affected by it, i.e., program participants, local residents, and/or agency representatives.

Additional Note

Consider how service site representatives might be included in the opening evening for orientation purposes and in the closing celebration on the last day of the program.



Work Site Checklist

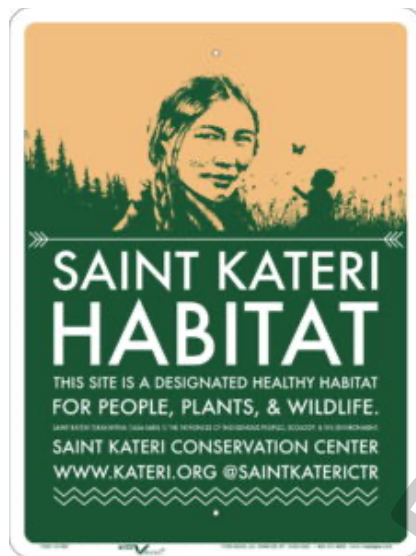
Establishing and maintaining work sites will include:

- ☒ Investigating potential work sites that meet the established criteria (see *Criteria for a Work Site*). This can be done between six months and one year before *Families on a Mission*.
- ☒ Selecting appropriate work sites.
- ☒ Confirming dates with the work site representatives.
- ☒ Developing a work site description sheet (provided) and roster (provided) for each site selected.
- ☒ Discerning which program participants are most appropriate for each work site. (Be aware of age restrictions established by work sites and skill levels needed for the work.)
- ☒ Creating accurate driving directions to the work sites, including the name, the full address, and the phone number of the work site contact person.
- ☒ Arranging for training/orientation at each work site on initial workday.
- ☒ Asking the work site representative if there is a "Plan B" if the original plan has a chance of falling through on the service days (this is a possibility especially when working with clients whose schedules are unpredictable).
- ☒ Arranging for necessary supplies to be available at work sites throughout the week. (Determine who will provide supplies, the parish, the participants, or the work site.)
- ☒ Visiting work sites on a regular basis during the program week.
- ☒ Being prepared to adjust assignments for a work team if the site does not work out during the program.



St. Kateri Habitats and Parks Program

The Saint Kateri Conservation Center offers a Catholic Habitats and Parks ministry to inspire Catholics and others to restore yards, gardens, schools, farms, parks, forests, rivers, and wetlands into healthy habitats for people and wildlife. We do this close to home, where we live and work. This program is a good option to consider for developing a Families on a Mission worksite.



The Catholic Habitats and Parks ministry encourages individuals, parishes, schools, religious orders, and working landowners to restore their land, homes, parishes, and communities in ways that praise God and foster a greater connection between God, people, and nature. Saint Kateri Habitats and Parks are more than simply material or temporal habitats; they are also spiritual habitats.

With a focus on God and the Catholic faith, the program provides living, sacred spaces for all people to engage directly in the care of God's creation at home and in their communities. By restoring habitats with reverence and gratitude for our Creator, the program draws people closer to God and his Church while protecting the integrity of creation as God has planned.

Anyone can transform their buildings and land into healthy habitats. It can be as simple as planting a tree or growing wildflowers for bees and butterflies. Saint Kateri Habitats and Parks may be private or public. The program is flexible, for example, participants may plant one tree or an entire forest, or tend a container garden on a patio or a 100-acre farm. You may refer to the area as "habitat" or "park." It's up to you.

Participants receive guidance from the Center's professional ecologists, a personalized certificate, recognition on our online ESRI Story Maps (the original Catholic habitat registry and mapper), and an option to purchase yard signs officially designating their site as Saint Kateri Habitat.

Participants are asked for a voluntary donation of \$20 to support the Center's mission.

How it Works

Saint Kateri Habitats and Parks should provide at least **three** of the following elements, *plus* one **religious expression**, as follows:

- **Food, water, cover, and space for people and wildlife.** This includes vegetable gardens, flower and pollinator gardens, patio gardens, **community-supported agriculture, forests, farms, rivers, lakes, grasslands, and healthful and safe workplaces.**
- **Native** trees, shrubs, and wildflowers to promote **biodiversity**, such as milkweed and goldenrod for monarch butterflies. Some non-native plants are good and acceptable, as long as they are not invasive.
- **Ecosystem** services offered by gardens, wildlife habitats, and natural communities, such as **pollination, clean air and water**, carbon storage for **climate regulation**, and the control of invasive species. **Religious faith** arising from interactions with the “**Book of Nature**” is an important ecosystem service.
- **Clean, renewable energy and sustainable** practices for **buildings and property**, gardens, landscapes, and farms, such as solar arrays and minimizing the use of pesticides and using organic or no-phosphorus fertilizer.
- **Sacred and sacramental** places for **prayer and contemplation**, such as Mary Gardens (see <https://www.kateri.org/mary-gardens-for-a-spiritual-experience/>), prayer gardens, shrines, and rosary gardens. Any garden or habitat can be treated as sacramental by **giving thanks** to our **Creator** for his works and gifts.

In addition, at least one religious expression is required, which may include crosses, shrines, grottos, stations of the cross, Saint Kateri Habitat signs, or statues of Mary, an angel, or a saint, such as Saint Kateri or Saint Francis of Assisi. This religious expression reminds us that God – the Holy Spirit – is present and active in every corner of creation.

Learn more and register for the program at <https://www.kateri.org/saint-kateri-habitat-2/>. The page includes helpful links and ideas.

If you're not sure if your habitat or park qualifies (it probably does) or you have any questions, send an email to our friends in ministry at saintkatericenter@gmail.com. They let you know and provide any additional advice you may need.

Saint Kateri Habitats and Parks provide the benefits of increasing faith in God while preserving wildlife, saving energy, reducing climate change, and protecting land and water for future generations.



Service Site Ideas

1. Community gardens
2. Local park
3. Local playgrounds (schools, day cares)
4. Nursing and Retirement home grounds – gardens
5. Building raised bed or standing gardens for disabled or elderly
6. Starting a parish garden
7. Local wildlife sanctuary
8. Community efforts on graffiti clean –up
9. Community efforts on recycling
10. Work on an organic farm
11. Build birdhouses for elderly
12. Create a poster campaign for household energy saving (bring to neighborhood stores and shops)
13. Paint a mural with scripture/inspiration
14. Make garden stepping stones for parishioners to purchase – giving money to community program
15. Plant trees (see Arbor Day options for purchasing trees or getting free trees), especially in impoverished areas that particularly lack them
16. Help at a local zoo
17. Create a drama to perform for elementary children or families on caring for God's Creation
18. Community promotion of environmental stewardship done with chalk around the town
19. Plant a native species garden – learn first what is native to your area from a local university extension office
20. Create a St. Francis peace garden at the parish or school – make posters to invite people to take time to reflect there.
21. Create Public Service videos – teaching about recycling, taking the St. Francis Pledge from www.catholicclimatecovenant.org, how to make a raised bed garden, choosing farm to table as a family etc.



Here is a video with the song: https://youtu.be/TWUKEJS3y_U

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.
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. "Clap Your Hands" by They Might Be Giants
This song is an easy icebreaker to get families moving in the morning.