

## Families Together article

We think God knew exactly what our family needed when so many changes occurred for us this past fall. We were so excited to see our parish accept a new challenge and present the opportunity for busy families to maintain an active and meaningful faith journey through the Families Together program. In place of the more traditional, PSR or religion classes, we decided to be one of the first families to choose religious education at home with the guidance of Julie Sutton.

Our oldest son Luke had just completed the Holy Sacrament of Confirmation with his 8th grade class at St. Michaels School. His preparation was excellent, and we knew that his formal faith instruction was coming to a close. It was now an even bigger responsibility for us as parents to maintain an active faith example for him.

Our younger son Andrew is a busy kid outside of the school day. He participates in sports that consume week nights and weekends with practices and games. His schedule challenges us to find a different Mass to attend each weekend. Believe us, it would be easy to convince ourselves that we could just “skip” this week, but we know how important it is for us to refuel spiritually and to give thanks for all that we have received.

The Families Together program has been an excellent option for our family. We feel more connected and involved as we challenge ourselves to serve our community, pray together as a family, and study the Gospel one on one with our child.

Each week we work through a pamphlet that is focused on the weekly gospel. We try to do this before we attend Mass. Andrew will often comment about the readings we hear at church and seems to relate more to the details of what we have previously prepared. The lessons we share are relevant and current. This is what we love about the published material. We’ve discussed, what makes a leader worth following, preparing for situations in life and also what happens when we don’t prepare, an examination of what we do for others, and how to handle situations of bullying. Making the connection of day-to-day experiences to our faith is invaluable.

In addition to studying the gospel, we’ve been encouraged to participate in serving our community. We’ve chosen activities that are meaningful and age appropriate, but we’ve also realized that even an hour here and there is helpful to others. Cookie making for Catholic Charities fundraiser, sorting and boxing food for the Thanksgiving Meal project, making fleece blankets for a Crisis Center, preparing a meal for Catholic Workers House in Alliance are the few places we’ve served. We hope these small gestures helped someone along the way.

Praying together is an area we are still working on. We sometimes fall into the typical prayer for before meals and night time prayer, but we know that this is something we will challenge ourselves to improve.

Knowing that we aren’t the only family presented with the challenges of a busy work and school life is helpful. We like meeting with the other families that have also chosen this route for their faith journey right now. It has been a perfect fit for our family. We aren’t perfect, we are busy, but we also love our faith. We know how important it is to set a priority for it in our lives and feel that the Families Together program works for our family.

