

Dear Parishioners,

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One of the things I am trying to get to know at St Wendelin is our organized faith formation programs. So, the team has been visioning some about CCD – and as you know COVID-19 affects everything we plan – and we ended up learning about the Damascus' *Alive: Family Faith Formation* program. Jessica Pehmoeller and I will be presenting this to parents this coming Wednesday evening. Information has been sent out to all parents. I believe the program is promising, and allows parents to take the lead in faith formation within the home; and it has the added benefit of being COVID-19 friendly. We won't have to worry about social distancing needs as much with this program; and this is good news, since we don't know how long we will have to deal with the pandemic. We want to provide something to our families for Faith formation. Ever more increasingly, catechesis these days is tending towards a focus on the whole family. This is pretty important, because building up Catholic family faith culture is the number one priority. In addition to the *Alive: Family Faith Formation*, which families can experience in their homes on Wednesday evenings, we will provide some gathering times at the church for those children who are in sacramental prep this year.

Then, at the adult level, there is also the very promising video series from the Augustine Institute, entitled *The Search*. *The Search* is something to which parishioners can invite anybody, or just attend by themselves for inspiration. We envision *The Search* serving also as the beginning of the RCIA process, since many of the basic topics overlap with what we would do for RCIA first semester. Anybody attending *The Search* with the intent to join the Catholic Church will complete the year with the second half of the RCIA program.

I was planning on waiting a year to introduce *YDisciple*, but I've really been feeling inspired to introduce it now. *YDisciple* also comes out of the Augustine Institute. What if there are high school aged youth who would like to meet in small groups with their friends? *YDisciple* is a great program that is parent driven. If you are a parent who has a high school aged youth, and you would like to have a small faith group for your son or daughter, based on those friendships that already exist, you as a parent approach another two Catholic adults, and ask if they would be willing to be trained as small group leaders. (Each group is run by two adults.) Then you come to me with your recommendation for a group and its leaders; and I train the leaders how to run a group. There are parent sheets that keep the parents totally in-touch with the topics each week, and can be used for further conversation with your high school youth.

*YDisciple* groups are made up of 5-8 young men or young women. They meet three times a month, rotating among the homes of the members. A basic evening lasts 1-1/2 hours. You start out with food and fun for half an hour, just enjoying each other's company and catching up. Then the next hour is made up of video segments, with questions that draw everybody into conversation. Nobody is allowed to exempt himself or herself from the conversation. The materials are pretty engaging. The videos highlight the most “rock-star” youth workers in the country. The leaders' guides are super helpful and super easy to use.

We introduced *YDisciple* at my last parish, about a year after I arrived, and it proved to be quite a success. We had three different campuses (from three prior churches that were merged) as part of the parish, and each campus had a high school men's group and a high school women's group. With each group having 5-10 youth, we ended up with somewhere around 40-50 youth in the program consistently. And, every year as seniors graduated, I received notes from some of them about how transformative the program was. It's not just the materials that transformed them. The purpose of the materials is to help them share faith in Jesus Christ, and this experience of faith sharing and learning

[guided by materials from the heart of the Church] is what was transformative, filled with God's grace. On the fourth week of the month, we planned co-ed activities with the groups together. (This could prove imprudent while in the midst of COVID-19, but perhaps we would get to that point even this year sometime?)

So, If there is a group of you that would like to learn more about *YDisciple*, please let me know, and I can schedule a more formal presentation with a sampling of the materials. I realize that COVID-19 continues to affect everything, including our decisions about being together in any sort of groups. You would want to have such groups practice social distancing; and that might not seem possible in some homes. But I am assuming that some friends are finding ways still to be together, so perhaps *YDisciple* could serve some of our high school youth even now. I just offer it as a possibility for your consideration.

Have a blessed week!

*In cordibus Iesu et Mariae,*

Father Poggemeyer