



COURSE INTRODUCTION

THE PROGRAM

serves as a brief doctrinal course for mothers, with an emphasis on practical ways of bringing the Catholic faith home to the family. It is designed specifically for mothers of young children who are interested in a review of their faith, are aware of their duty to be the first educators of the faith in the home, and desire to make new friends with other mothers.

As Pope Saint John Paul II wrote in *Catechesi Tradendae*: “The primary and essential object of catechesis is... ‘the mystery of Christ’. Catechizing is in a way to lead a person to study this mystery in all its dimensions....Accordingly, the definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity.” (CT, 5)

Hence, this course was written by a mother, for mothers, to help them bring their families closer to Jesus Christ through knowledge of the truth and logic of His teaching, which carries us closer to the ultimate source of love.

THE SPIRIT

of the program is rooted in ordinary life. The objective is to educate young mothers in the faith while helping them see how they can effectively practice it within the ordinary, everyday circumstances of motherhood. Although greater understanding of the faith naturally fosters interior growth and a deeper love of God, absolute respect must always be maintained for each mother’s personal freedom and for the current state of her life’s circumstances.

Engaged participants will come away from this course knowing that they can realize greater happiness and peace by fulfilling their ordinary role of being a mom in a way that is pleasing in the eyes of God: by doing their work well and offering it to Our Lord; by maintaining a sense of God’s presence while at work or play; by being kind and charitable to others; by accepting contradictions and trials graciously; and by looking for opportunities to draw friends, neighbors, and strangers closer to God.

The role of the presenter in all of this is very important, since she is responsible for setting the tone. She needs to be thoughtful about showing warmth and care for the attending moms; about conveying the information with assurance; and about managing all of the logistical course details well. I also recommend, whenever possible, that the presenter acquire a basic sense for each participant’s background of religious formation, education, and experiences.

THE COURSE

could be held in a public meeting room or church hall; but if possible, it is preferable to meet in the warmth of a private home or subdivision clubhouse. What mom, after all, wouldn’t want to visit a friendly home to hear some good advice?

Two hours should be allotted per meeting, which includes fifteen minutes of visiting time before and after the actual session. The course itself is composed of twelve talks that are meant to be given during ninety-minute sessions. The presenter will give a thirty-minute talk on a topic; then lead a thirty-minute discussion of practical applications



pertaining to the topic that any mom could incorporate into her family life; and then close by facilitating a thirty-minute question-and-answer period. Each talk can stand on its own without necessary reference to preceding talks, so moms can feel free to join a course in progress or resume it if they have to miss a session.

The first nine talks cover basic Catholic doctrine and will provide the moms with an understanding of the core elements of the faith. The last three talks focus on strengthening one's interior life and on becoming familiar with common Catholic terms and practices.

Originally, the course was designed to run during a typical nine-month school year, with one session each month for nine months, a break for the summer, and then three more sessions the following fall. The full program could also be completed by meeting every three weeks during the school year, which would see the course wrapped up in nine months instead of twelve. But in the end, the presenter is free to start a course at any time and according to whatever schedule she chooses. All course scheduling and logistical decisions are entirely up to her.

HOUSEKEEPING

first calls for the participants to be charged a reasonable fee for the course (to cover the presenter's costs in running off all of the handouts and resources). This course fee can be collected during the first few sessions.

The best way of organizing the handouts is to purchase a small binder for each participant. I recommend copying, three-hole punching, and distributing the relevant highlights, practical applications, and resources (if applicable) at the very beginning of each session. The participants can then take those papers home in their binders and bring them back each time, adding the material for subsequent talks to their binders as they go. However, it's been my experience that most of the moms will not make it to every session and/or will lose some of the papers. In that case, the presenter can download from the website any items that a mom may have missed (highlights, practical applications, resources) and email them to her.

Special Note: A few weeks before Talk 7, please contact the Midwest Theological Forum using the information on the back of the Short Guide for Confession, and order the necessary number of pamphlets for your group.

Finally, the course evaluation form should be distributed, filled out, and collected by the presenter at the end of the last session. The participants' feedback is for the benefit of the presenter. The presenter is welcome to share her own feedback with me via the email address above.

BABYSITTING

for the care of preschoolers of the moms attending can come from different sources. One effective approach is to arrange for one or two homeschooled 7th or 8th graders to babysit either for pay or for service hours. If these are not available, the participating moms could set up a rotation and take turns babysitting. Or one or two senior adults could be hired to do the babysitting. In any case, it is helpful if the children being babysat are taken to a different floor of the house, or far enough away from the meeting room so as to minimize interruptions and distractions. Another option would be to schedule the sessions in the evening (around 7 p.m. for example) once a month so the



moms could better focus on conversations and building friendships for support and encouragement.

THE TALKS

were thoroughly reviewed for theological accuracy leading up to conferral of *imprimatur* approval upon the program by the Archdiocese of St. Louis. The presenter should feel free to abbreviate sections of the talks under time constraint, or to be creative in how she presents the material. She may wish to elaborate on certain points through side commentary to provide further clarifications. Side comments and anecdotes should be kept brief, however, as there is often a lot of content to cover in a limited timeframe.

Though all of the talks are important, Talks 6 and 7 hold special significance insofar as they speak to traditional morality and its relationship to modern American thought and culture. This is where the “rubber hits the road”. If your moms have to miss any sessions, ask them to try not to miss those two.

THE HIGHLIGHTS

eliminate the need for note taking. Since you will be distributing bullet-point lists of highlight summaries for each talk, you can assure your moms that they will be free simply to listen during the talks. I recommend distributing the highlights (as well as the practical applications) at the very beginning of each session to give the participants something to follow along by, and so that they will have the information in hand in case there is a need for anyone to leave early. The highlights enable the participants to bring key points from each talk home with them to look back on and review at a later time. As with certain talks, some of the highlight summaries are extensive -- to the point of encompassing more than half the content of the talk itself. This is by design. The highlight content that it was felt the participants should be able to take home with them was carefully selected.

THE PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

related to each talk are to be read and discussed during the second thirty-minute part of each session after the talk. They serve as practical ways of applying the truth contained in the talks to the everyday circumstances, challenges, and experiences of motherhood. The goal is that each mom listening to the practical applications might take one or two ideas per session and try to incorporate them into her family life.

Although the lists of practical applications each include many ideas, it is important to emphasize to your moms that they are not meant to be overwhelming checklists of immediate expectations. Participants who seriously work at implementing just a few ideas per month -- or even per semester -- are more likely to succeed than those who try implementing too many ideas at once. They will always have the lists to go back to and review over the years if they want to incorporate more of the ideas.

THE Q&A PERIOD

during the final thirty-minute part of each session is very important. It gives the participants an opportunity to ask questions about what was said in the talks, gain further clarification, and share about practices that are working well in their own homes.

The presenter should be seen as the leader of the Q&A period, just as she is of the other parts of the session. You may doubt that you are ready to fill this role, but know



that you are well prepared to answer questions -- maybe not perfectly, but as best you can with the Holy Spirit's help. For reference support, I highly recommend these three sources: the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*; the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*; and *The Faith Explained*. Also, take notice of each individual's participation level. You may need to cut short the participation of some who enjoy having the floor, just as you may need to help draw out others who are more reserved.

THE RESOURCES

included with the program, which can be found at the back of the binder are: 1) the "Prayers and Practices" brochure; 2) the list of Church feast days; 3) the "Overview of the Virtues" article; 4) the Examination of Conscience lists; 5) the Short Guide for Confession pamphlet; 6) the "Seven Daily Habits" article; 7) the lists of recommended websites and books for further reading; and 8) the promotional fliers and tracking sheets.

I recommend handing out copies of the "Prayers and Practices" brochure at the beginning of the very first session so that it can serve as an overview; but you should also bring some extra copies of the brochure to the final 12th session, when it will be thoroughly reviewed and discussed. (Note that that the P&P brochure is formatted to be printed out on 8 1/2" X 14" legal sized paper.) The list of Church feast days should be handed out at the start of the session for Talk 3; the "Overview of the Virtues" article should be handed out at the start of the session for Talk 4; the Examination of Conscience lists and the Short Guide for Confession pamphlet should be handed out at the start of the session for Talk 7; and the "Seven Daily Habits" article should be handed out at the start of the session for Talk 8. The lists of recommended websites and books for further reading may be distributed at the final session; and the promotional fliers and tracking sheets are for use at different stages throughout the program.

THE WEBSITE

for the program is www.momstransmitthefait.com. The presenter will be able to find posted on this site: 1) all of the front matter -- the title page, the imprimatur page, the acknowledgements, the table of contents, the foreword, and the course introduction; 2) the highlight summaries for each talk; 3) the practical applications for each talk; and 4) the eight resources listed above.