



# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

*from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study*

#103 – July 2019

## Adult Formation: Counting the Consequences

Have you ever wondered: if something were missing, what would life be like? It's an interesting subject to ponder!

All of our Church documents for the past forty years have affirmed that adult faith formation is the core educational effort of the Church. In 1999 the U.S. bishops issued *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States*. In this document the bishops reiterated that teaching and called for renewed efforts to make the education and formation of adults the central focus, the top priority of what we do as a church.

Adult faith formation  
“must be situated not at the periphery  
of the Church’s educational mission  
but at its center.”

*Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us, #42*

In light of this conviction, what if we asked:

- Is adult faith formation just a nice thing to do when we have the time and money left over and are looking for something more to round out our parish calendar for the year or is it integral to all we do?
- **Are there consequences from not making adult faith formation a priority?**

## Some Consequences

Some consequences immediately come to mind. Which ones might be true for your parish community:

- Many adult Catholics would miss out on the fullness of a rich Catholic faith and spirituality which could give significant meaning and direction to their lives.
- Some Catholic adults regard the church as irrelevant or, perhaps, leave the church entirely because what they understand about their faith from their childhood religious education doesn't fit with their current real-life experience. Their past formation was adequate for their younger years but it does not answer the questions of the adult years or today's growing complex world.
- Without adult faith formation, the catechesis of today's children could be adversely affected because parents who are not continually growing in their faith might not be able or willing to reinforce healthy Christian living and values in the home.
- Adults without updated faith formation might be in a position to be easily influenced by movements and developments, such as fundamentalism, new age trends, misinformation regarding the church as portrayed or reported in the media, etc.
- In some areas and parishes, lay leaders are not being recruited, prepared and formed at a time when the church has a great need for the development of the gifts of the laity and the collaboration of the laity and the ordained in ministry.
- Because of Baptism, all Christians are called to be leaven in society – to bring Gospel values to the world, to government, to the workplace, to the neighborhood, to the family, to all relationships. People cannot do this if they are not aware that this is integral to their Baptismal call; they cannot do this if their skills are not being continually developed.

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- Adult Catholics in today's world are frequently faced with far-reaching moral choices; the complexity of the choices are growing rapidly with the increase of technology, science, medical advances, etc. Many people are often ill-prepared to base their choices on an awareness of Gospel values and a solid understanding of current Church teaching.
- An inadequately-catechized adult population is less committed to the church financially.

Give adult faith formation the best  
of our pastoral resources and energies.

Within the whole scope of catechetical ministry,  
adult catechesis must be regarded  
as a preferential option in planning and programming.

*Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us, #78*

## GEMS Suggestion

This just scratches the surface of the consequences that flow from not making adult faith formation a priority in our church today.

What do you think?

- As you continue to plan for the future as teams and staffs
- As parish leadership plans goals and programs, why not take time as a parish pastoral council, education commission, adult faith formation committee, and parish staff to ask the questions:

**What are the consequences – for our parish – that would result from not making faith formation for adults a priority?**

**Are there things that would not happen?**

**Are we willing to accept the consequences?**

## GEMS Wondering

- What would be the **consequences** if our parish chose not to make faith formation for adults a priority?
- How might our parish **benefit** from placing a priority on adult faith formation for the coming year?
- What would we need to do to make it a priority?



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Past issues of **GEMS** are archived at [www.janetschaeffler.com](http://www.janetschaeffler.com)

Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found in:

- *Deepening Faith: Adult Faith Formation in the Parish*  
<https://www.litpress.org/Products/4652/Deepening-Faith>
- *The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation*  
[http://www.lifelongfaith.com/store/p25/The\\_Seasons\\_of\\_Adult\\_Faith\\_Formation.html](http://www.lifelongfaith.com/store/p25/The_Seasons_of_Adult_Faith_Formation.html) and <http://www.lifelongfaith.com/2015-adult-faith-formation-symposium.html>