



# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

*from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study*

#106 - October 2019

## A Best Practice: Choices and Self-Direction in Adult Faith Formation (Part I)

Last month we explored some endeavors in offering choice and self-direction in faith formation opportunities for children, youth and families.

Is it possible to also do that for all the adults in our parishes?

- Is it possible to make adult faith formation available 24/7?
- Is it possible to design opportunities so that adults have before them a wide variety of possibilities?
- Is it possible that their choices, then, can flow from their needs, their availability, their learning style?

One way to achieve these possibilities, as John Roberto reminds us, is to build a network:

“In the twenty-first century, the curriculum is the **network**. On the network people can experience the life and substance of the Christian faith in a way that expands both the content and environments and can be personalized and customized to their life and faith journey. The fundamental operating system and delivery system for faith formation is now the network.

- The network provides a **variety of experiences, programs, activities, resources, and social connections** that are available anytime and anywhere, in physical places and online spaces, and conducted in variety of settings—self-directed, mentored, at home, in small groups, in large groups, church-wide, in the community, and in the world.
- The network **incorporates digital platforms (websites)** that integrate all of the content (programs, activities, resources), connect people to the content and to each other, provide continuity for people across different learning experiences, and is available anytime, anywhere.
- The network **integrates online and face-to-face learning**, blending learning in a variety of ways from online programs with minimal

interaction in physical settings to programs in physical settings that utilize online content or extend the program using online content.”  
(<http://www.reimaginefaithformation.com/design.html>)

## What Might This Look Like?

We’ll explore the actual networks of a few churches shortly. First, John Roberto has designed the “Seasons of Adult Faith Formation” website as a **demonstration of a possible online platform** for adult faith formation.  
(<http://www.seasonsofadultfaith.com/>)

It is designed as a network of faith formation with:

- a diversity of content (programs, activities, resources)
- a variety of media (print, audio, video, apps, etc.)
- multiple environments for engagement (independent, mentored, family, small group, large group, parish-wide, community-wide)

**Adult Faith Formation Network**

1. Adult Living
2. Discovering Faith
3. Faith Enrichment
4. Scripture
5. Seasons of the Year
6. Service
7. Spiritual Life
8. Sunday Worship

ADULT FAITH FORMATION

Home Adult Living Discovering Faith Faith Enrichment Scripture Seasons Service Spiritual Life Sunday Worship

# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

As you enter this network, you find eight themes/categories for adult opportunities. Given your focus for the year or season, your parish might choose several different or additional themes.

To reflect on some of the possibilities within these various themes, let's explore one of the categories on this demonstration site: Spiritual Life.

The site begins by highlighting a five-week face-to-face opportunity which happens at church: Spiritual Practices for Living. Notice that:

- easy registration can take place via the website
- for those who cannot be there in person, they can watch each presentation online



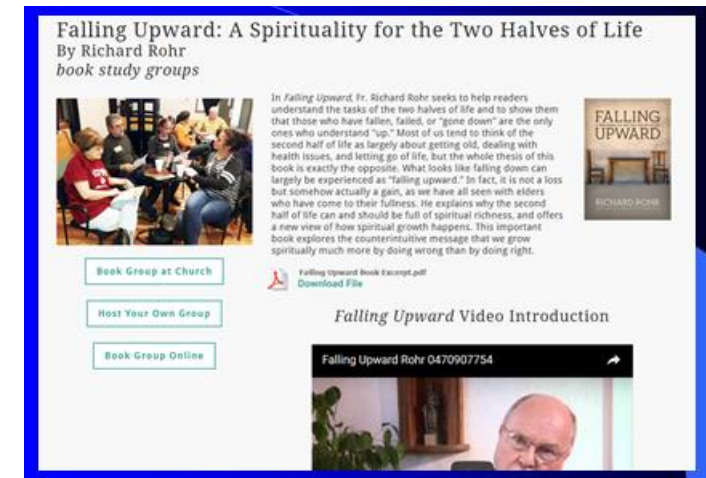
Acknowledging that growth is continual and constant, the site then provides articles and activities which feature numerous tools to help deepen an understanding and appreciation of the various spiritual practices that are highlighted in the five-week sessions.



The site then provides an additional opportunity to explore spirituality through participation in a book club. Various options for the book clubs are available:

- at the parish
- in homes
- online

To help people have more information about the book, the site provides a video introduction to the book as well as a book excerpt.



# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

To help people continue to explore various forms of prayer (at their leisure, on their time schedule), the site provides links for information on:

- Contemplative Prayer
- Centering Prayer
- Guided Meditation
- Other 6
- Lectio Divina
- The Liturgy of the Hours

**Explore a Prayer Practice**  
experience a prayer practice - just click on the title



**Contemplative Prayer**  
Maybe you're not the memorized prayer type of person, nor do you like to be confined to a scripture reading or a devotional book. Not to worry, there are many ways to pray and this one only takes your presence and attention. For those who have plenty of excuses for not praying but genuinely want to know God's presence, contemplative prayer may be something to try.

**Centering Prayer**  
Prayer is a very personal experience of being with God. Each person finds different meaningful ways to pray. Centering Prayer is a style of meditative prayer that many people find significant while others find the long silence boring. The only way you'll find out if it helps you connect with your deepest spiritual yearnings is to try it.

**Guided Meditation**  
The Psalms are wonderful prayers that can be used to communicate to God our desires, and for God to communicate in return. Using the guidance of voice, relax your body and mind and open your soul to prayer.


**Other 6**  
Ignatius of Loyola, the 16th-century founder of the Jesuits, devised an "examination of consciousness"—a prayerful review of the day intended to help people recognize where they were fleeing, or needing to find, God in their lives. **Other6** takes the essence of this centuries-old practice of the Examen and adapts it for today's Internet-driven world by posing two questions: Where have you found God today? and Where do you need to find God today?

**Lectio Divina**  
Lectio Divina is Latin for "Holy Reading." It is a style of prayer in which you take a scripture passage and read it slowly, pondering the words and letting them sink into your soul leading to insight or action.

**Liturgy of the Hours (Fixed Hour Prayer)**  
Praying the "Liturgy of the Hours" (also known as The Divine Office) is a long-standing monastic tradition, but you don't have to be a monk to enter into the spirit of this form of prayer. Learn how a busy family person can adapt this practice of praying throughout

The site continues its offering of resources by providing links to a few (of the many) online prayer and reflection opportunities.

**Take Time for Daily Devotion**  
find a daily devotion that works for you - just click on the title



**3 Minute Retreat**  
Loyola Press's highly popular 3-Minute Retreat is available via newsletter and app for the iPhone® and iPod touch® and the iPad. Each day, a new retreat features soothing music, Scripture verses, and reflective thoughts and questions. Meaningful time with God is always just a touch away. (Download the App.)

**Daily Meditation & Reflection from Henri Nouwen**  
Drawn from a wide range of Henri Nouwen's writing, these short meditations inspire and guide people's mind and heart. Each reflection takes less than a minute to read and yet can set the tone for the day. It is sent via email in the early morning. Sign up on the website to receive *Bread for the Journey*.

**Daily Prayer: JesuitPrayer.org**  
Daily prayer is essential for nourishing our relationship with Christ. We become ever more mindful of God's presence in all facets of our lives. Through the daily Scripture, Reflection, and Prayer, JesuitPrayer.org helps people be fortified in God's faithfulness and his invitation to move through your day in a spirit of service to others. The prayer experience is provided every day of the week, with reflections rooted in Ignatian spirituality.

**God Pauses**  
God Pause e-mail devotions are short, meaningful reflections on the following Sunday's lessons and gospel delivered directly to your e-mail box. By Sunday, you'll be ready for an extra meaningful worship experience.

**Liturgy of the Hours - Divine Office App**  
Listen and pray the Liturgy of the Hours on the go. The Divine Office App is an opportunity for you to participate in the recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours, an ancient and meditative collection of psalms, hymns and scripture that represent the public prayer of the Christian community. Also available are three Lite apps: Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and Night Prayer.

**Sacred Space Daily Reflection**  
Sacred Space ordinarily follows the scripture sequence of the Revised Common Lectionary. Longer reflections on the daily scripture readings are presented for Sundays.

The conclusion of this section of the adult faith formation website (centered on Spirituality offerings and resources) points to:

- some online courses
- one (of the many) online retreats

**Take a Course with a Spiritual Guide**  
from SpiritualityandPractice.com



**Wisdom for Living: The Parables of Jesus**  
By Thomas Keating, Contemplative Outreach  
An exploration of the wise and revolutionary teachings of Jesus through the lens of the parables.

**Ways to Pray from Around the World**  
By Maggie Oman Shannon  
How to incorporate 12 creative spiritual practices from different cultures and religious traditions into your prayer life.

**Centering Prayer**  
By Cynthia Bourgeault  
Teachings about a no-frills form of meditation which reconnects directly to Christianity's hidden treasury of mystical wisdom.

**Make a Retreat - Online**



**Creighton University Online Retreat**

This is a retreat designed for people too busy to make a traditional retreat. People can experience a relationship with God coming alive in the midst of everyday life. A Simple Guide each week places themes, reflections, questions and desires into the background of our busy lives. We learn to find greater focus and to let one week build upon another. Begin any time, but if a person begins the week of September 19th, the retreat fits with the Liturgical Year. People can make the retreat alone, with a spiritual director, or form a group to make the retreat together.

## Endeavors from a Sampling of Churches



Round Hill Community Church, Greenwich, CT recently concluded a year of themed faith formation for all ages which included face-to-face and digital opportunities. Each month they concentrated upon a different virtue or practice.

(<https://www.roundhillcommunitychurch.org/growing-faith-0>)

**2017**

July: FREEDOM 

June: FRIENDSHIP 

May: IMAGINATION 

April: LOVE 

March: HUMILITY 

February: HOPE 

January: FAITH 

**2016**

December: PEACE 

November: HOSPITALITY 

October: GENEROSITY 

September: GRATITUDE 

# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

The initial exploration of the practice took place live, an “anchoring event” – their Sunday worship. The sermons from each Sunday – exploring a different aspect of the virtue or practice - were available via podcast. People have appreciated the sermon podcasts so much that they are asking for more. They are able to listen to the podcasts as they commute to work (many ride the train into New York City).

Each month their website – providing a network – included ideas for continuing the exploration of the virtue/practice via three opportunities:

- learn
- pray
- live

## LEARN

Want to be Happy? Be Grateful

The one thing all humans have in common is that each of us wants to be happy, says Brother David Steindl-Rast, a monk and interfaith scholar. And happiness, he suggests, is born from gratitude. An inspiring lesson in slowing down, looking where you're going, and above all, being grateful.

[Go to TED to learn more and read the transcript.](#)

Br. David's interview with Krista Tippett about Gratefulness



## PRAY

Gratitude Prayer for the Month

*Gracious God, in the busyness of my day, I sometimes forget to stop to thank You for all that is good in my life. My blessings are many and my heart is filled with gratefulness for the gift of living, for the ability to love and be loved, for the opportunity to see the everyday wonders of creation, for sleep and water, for a mind that thinks and a body that feels. I thank you, too, for those things in my life that are less than I would hope them to be. Things that seem challenging, unfair, or difficult. When my heart feels stretched and empty and pools of tears form in my weary eyes, still I rejoice that you are as near to me as my next breath and that in the midst of turbulence, I am growing and learning. In the silence of my soul, I thank you most of all for your unconditional and eternal love. Amen.*

Psalms on Gratitude

Read and Reflect on the Psalm each week.

Week 1 - Psalm 65 and Psalm 100

Week 2 - Psalm 103

Week 3 - Psalm 104

Week 4 - Psalm 107

## LIVE

Basic, Daily Gratefulness Practice

If, each day, we could engage in a “basic daily gratefulness practice,” it would be enough to positively impact our lives and the world around us. Just because a practice is simple does not mean it has simple results. Even though you might choose to try this practice in a more formal way at the same time each day, it can be done anytime, anywhere, and as often as you want.

[Go to Gratefulness.org to experience the practice.](#)

Gratitude through the Day

Gratitude, like any other spiritual practice, is something we do, not just something we feel. And it's something we need to practice. To practice gratitude, we don't need a special cushion on which to sit, nor a special lamp to light, nor a special icon on which to gaze, nor special incense to smell, nor special prayer beads to finger, nor a special prayer or mantra to recite. (None of that is in any way bad or inappropriate. It may well help. It is simply not enough.)

What is enough is here and now. The Psalmist reminds us, “This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” (Ps 118: 24). Gratitude consecrates our life and makes us real, because it makes us really available to the real presence of Christ, who is at work within us and around us – now. We hope you'll try out these four simple invitations and see how they change your day.

6 am - Pray Your Gratitude  
Noon - Keep Your Eyes Open



Battenkill Catholic Community in Cambridge and Salem, NY hosts a website of resources for home use and/or activities in the parish and community. (<http://stpatrickslifelongfaith.weebly.com>)

## BATTENKILL CATHOLIC ADULT FAITH FORMATION

[HOME](#) [WORSHIP](#) [SCRIPTURE](#) [SEASON](#) [DISCIPLESHIP](#) [SOCIAL JUSTICE](#) [RITUALS](#) [FAMILY](#)



Welcome to The Battenkill Catholic  
Adult Faith Learning Center.

Here you will find activities and resources to enrich your faith and nurture your spiritual growth. You will also find information on study programs, small group faith sharing groups, and service opportunities in our parish and community.

# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

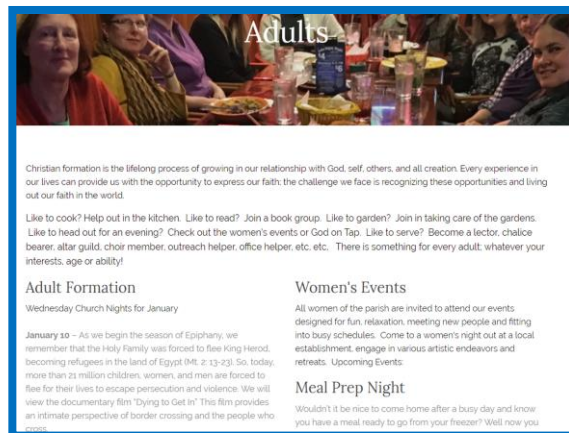


Likewise, Catholic Cathedral of St. Andrew, Grand Rapids, MI provides content and links for adults to access anytime anywhere. (<http://cathedraladultfaithformation.weebly.com>)



St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Duluth, MN has an extensive site for faith formation for all ages ([www.stpaulsfaithformation.org](http://www.stpaulsfaithformation.org)).

The adult faith formation page lists events at the parish as well as numerous links to for individual use.



You might want to explore these other sites which also provide opportunities for adults to choose what is most helpful as they continue their ongoing formation.

- Intergenerational Faith Formation: St. John and Paul Catholic Parish, Altoona, IA (<http://ssjohnpaulfaithformation.weebly.com>)
- A Site for Catechists: St. Mary of the Lake, Skaneateles, NY (<http://stmarysofthelakecatechist.weebly.com>)
- Family Faith Formation: St. Andrew Episcopal Church, Arlington, VA (<http://standrewsfish.weebly.com>)
- Linking Sunday to the Rest of the Week: Tri-Saints Lutheran Parish, Byron and Hardy, NE (<http://tri-saintsworship.weebly.com>)
- A Site of Reflections and Interactions: St. Edward the Confessor Catholic Parish, Dana Point, CA (<http://seekingfaith.stedward.com>)

## Sources and Resources

Many of these websites contain a plethora of “content.” Each parish did not individually create the content anew for we are blessed today to have high quality content – in various formats – already available to us. As you create an adult faith formation website and/or plan for face-to-face gatherings, be aware of the many sources from which to draw. A few of the many:

- See [GEMS #70](#) for several resources for video content.
- TheoEd Talks are like a TED Talks, but about a topic in theology or spirituality. <https://theoed.com/>
- Explore Faith: <http://www.explorefaith.org/Index.php>
- Catholics Australia: <http://www.catholicaustralia.com.au/>
- Catholic Ireland: <https://www.catholicireland.net/>
- eCatholicism: <http://www.ecatholicism.org/>

# GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

- For Your Marriage: <http://www.foryourmarriage.org/>
- Franciscan Media: <https://info.franciscanmedia.org/>
- U.S. Catholic: <http://www.uscatholic.org/>
- USCCB Media: <http://www.usccb.org/media/index.cfm>

**For Further Study and Conversation**, you might want to check:

- Faith Formation for Every Adult in Your Church—It's Possible Today!  
[http://www.faithformationlearningexchange.net/uploads/5/2/4/6/5/246709/faith\\_formation\\_for\\_every\\_adult\\_-\\_roberto.pdf](http://www.faithformationlearningexchange.net/uploads/5/2/4/6/5/246709/faith_formation_for_every_adult_-_roberto.pdf)
- Designing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Faith Formation:  
<http://slideplayer.com/slide/9356895/>
- Innovation: Faith Formation  
<http://www.innovationfaith.com/>

## GEMS Wonderings

- What did you read here that entices you to explore it further?
- What would be a first step to begin an online experience?
- Who in your parish is interested/experienced in technology that would be thrilled to be involved in setting up an adult faith formation interactive website?
- Think of one face-to-face program that you now offer; how might you also offer it online?



### Adding New Luster to an Older Gem

In the [GEMS issues](#) #86-88 we explored gardens as a spiritual practice and an opportunity for adult faith formation.

The following additional articles might spark more ideas for you:

- Gardening and the Secret of Happiness:  
<http://www.dailygood.org/story/2142/gardening-and-the-secret-of-happiness-maria-popova/>
- Growing a Cross-Cultural Garden:  
<http://www.dailygood.org/story/2204/growing-a-cross-cultural-garden-padma-hejmadi/>
- Sabbath as a Radical Act:  
<https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/sabbath-radical-act>



Janet Schaeffler, OP  
[www.janetschaeffler.com](http://www.janetschaeffler.com)  
[jschaeffler@adriandominicans.org](mailto:jschaeffler@adriandominicans.org)

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>