

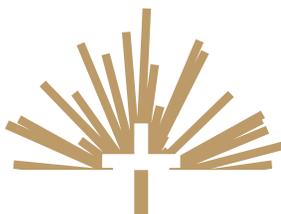


# FAITH FEEDS

Having a faith conversation with old and new friends is as easy as setting the table.

**FAITH FEEDS GUIDE  
FAMILY**

**C21**



THE CHURCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY CENTER

**BOSTON  
COLLEGE**



# CONTENTS

**Introduction to FAITH FEEDS 3**

**FAQ 4**

**Ready to Get Started 5**

**Conversation Starters 6**

- **On Faith and Family** by Fr. Michael Himes 7  
**Conversation Starters 8**
- **A Mother Hands on the Eucharist**  
by Karen Kiefer 9  
**Conversation Starters 11**
- **Gathering Prayer 12**

The C21 Center Presents

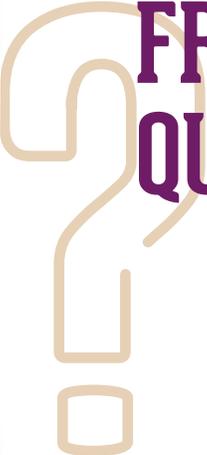


# FAITH FEEDS

The **FAITH FEEDS** program is designed for individuals in Catholic parishes who are hungry for opportunities to talk about their faith with others who share it. Participants gather over coffee or a potluck lunch or dinner, and a host parishioner facilitates conversation using the C21 Center's bi-annual magazine, *C21 Resources*.

The **FAITH FEEDS GUIDE** offers easy, step-by-step instructions for planning, as well as materials to guide the conversation. It's as simple as a parishioner deciding to host the gathering at the church hall and spreading the word.

The **FAITH FEEDS** themed conversation will be on the gift of family. Selected articles have been taken from the Fall 2011 and Spring 2015 issues of *C21 Resources*.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Who should host a FAITH FEEDS?

Anyone who has a heart for facilitating faith conversations among new friends. It doesn't take more than that.

## Who should I contact if I want to host a FAITH FEEDS?

You should contact your pastor or appropriate parish representative.

## What do I do if more than 10 people sign up?

We recommend creating a waiting list in the event any participants need to cancel. If enough people sign up for a second or third group, other parishioners can choose to serve as a host for a concurrent FAITH FEEDS.

## Do participants have to read the articles in advance?

We recommend that guests read the articles in order to get the most out of the conversation, but if they don't have time, the host's summary and questions will be sufficient to help participants join in.

## What is the host's commitment?

The host is responsible for coordinating culinary contributions, getting guests their materials, and facilitating conversation during the **FAITH FEEDS**.

## What is the guest's commitment?

Guests are asked to contribute something for the meal and, if time permits, to read the articles that will be discussed.

## Does a priest or parish representative need to attend?

It is not necessary for a priest or parish representative to attend, but they are certainly welcome to join as guests or to serve as a host.

# READY TO GET STARTED?



## STEP ONE

Decide to host a **FAITH FEEDS**. Contact your pastor or parish representative to confirm a date and time to use the church hall. An hour and a half to two hours is enough time to allocate for the gathering.



## STEP TWO

Spread the news to your fellow parishioners by coordinating with your parish representative. You might post a notice in the parish bulletin, make an announcement after Mass or promote on parish social media accounts. This small faith conversation gathering works best with 8 to 10 participants, so it shouldn't take long to fill out your guest list. Each **FAITH FEEDS** group will only meet once.



## STEP THREE

Interested participants are asked to RSVP directly to you, the host. Once you have your list of attendees, confirm with everyone via email. That would be the appropriate time to ask guests to commit to bringing a potluck dish or drink to the gathering.



## STEP FOUR

Review the selected articles from the *C21 Resources* magazine and questions that will serve as a starter for your **FAITH FEEDS** discussion. Hosts should encourage guests to download the Guest Packet on [FAITHFEEDS.org](http://FAITHFEEDS.org). Then, hosts should request free copies of the full magazine from the C21 Center to distribute at the gathering. Contact information can be found on page 15.



## STEP FIVE

Send out a confirmation email a week before the **FAITH FEEDS** gathering. Hosts should arrive early for set up. Begin with the Gathering Prayer found on page 15. Hosts can begin the discussion by presenting the summary and using the suggested questions. The conversation should grow organically from there. Enjoy this gathering of new friends, knowing the Lord is with YOU!



# CONVERSATION STARTERS

“Perfect families do not exist. This must not discourage us. Quite the opposite. Love is something we learn; love is something we live; love grows as it is ‘forged’ by the concrete situations which each particular family experiences.”  
—Pope Francis

Here are two articles to guide your **FAITH FEEDS** conversation. In addition to the original article, you will find a relevant quotation, summary, and suggested questions for discussion. We offer these as tools for your use, but feel free to go where the Holy Spirit leads.

This guide’s theme is: **Family**

# ON FAITH AND FAMILY

By Fr. Michael Himes

*FR. MICHAEL HIMES, theology professor at Boston College, spoke to an overflow crowd at the popular C21 student speaker series Agape Latte about the power of faith and family. Here's an excerpt from the talk:*

My father died a number of years ago, and my mother was living alone for years. We knew that she shouldn't be alone any longer, and so she decided to come and live with me, which I was absolutely delighted by. We had about 12 great years together here in Boston. My mother was an avid theatergoer and concertgoer, so we went regularly to the Boston Symphony and to theater here in Boston, and she'd show up at lectures at Boston College and at other universities because she just was interested in all sorts of things.

Finally, Mother began to show the signs, the unmistakable signs, of dementia, probably Alzheimer's caused. Eventually, it came to the point where we couldn't leave her alone for a moment. She would wander off.

And so she went in to a nursing home. For the next seven years, I went every night to that nursing home and fed her, because they found it hard to get her to eat unless it was me feeding her. I would hold her hand and just talk about anything that popped into my head until Mother dozed off for the evening, and then I would head out.

About a year before she died—she passed away a year ago last January—Mother said she was having a particularly bad evening. She seemed really very distracted. She didn't know she wasn't recognizing



anybody. And I said to her, “Now, dear, do you know who I am? Do you remember who I am?” And she really scrutinized me. And then she said, “I’m sorry, I don’t know that I could remember your name, but I do know that you’re someone I loved very much.”

Well, I’ve always said to my brother Ken (a Franciscan friar) that Mother was the best theologian in the family, that the two of us were just amateurs compared to her, because she got it exactly right. You may forget everything else, everything else in your life may disappear. You may forget even who loved you and how they loved you. But you never totally forget having loved someone else. You may forget being loved, but you never forget loving, because it is the most central, the most important, the most fundamental of all activities, not being loved, but loving.

That’s what family gives us an intimate chance to do, in circumstances that may be very supportive or very painful, that

we have the opportunity to give ourselves, to learn how to give ourselves to one another wisely and courageously and with tremendous forgiveness and deep acceptance.

If you learn that, you’ve learned everything that you need to know. If you learn everything else and you never find that out, you’ve missed what it is to be a human being, because human beings are called to be the people who do what God is. God is agape, and we get to enact it. That is the most extraordinary statement about being a human being that I know.





# A MOTHER HANDS ON THE EUCHARIST

By Karen Kiefer

We were running late. After gingerly negotiating the baby's car seat and oversized diaper bag through the narrow backdoor of St. Mary's Chapel, we found our way into an empty wooden pew at the back of the church; the noon Mass had already begun. This was our first stop on the way home from the hospital, after giving birth to our first baby daughter, and a chance for us to express our profound gratitude to God.

It had been an emotional 72 hours, and I really needed some God time. What I didn't know was that God needed some time with me, too.

As I settled our newborn into my arms, everything felt different. I had been to this chapel hundreds of

times before, praying for the moment when I would sit in front of His altar with a baby in my arms and my husband by my side. I couldn't believe I was living my dream, and now everything was different. I was a mother and we were a family; a Catholic family, celebrating the gift of the Eucharist together for the first time.

Before I could finish that thought, my eyes were dripping wet. Shocked by the abruptness and intensity of my tears, even embarrassed by them, I tried quickly to brush them away without disturbing the baby or drawing attention to myself. I remember wondering how tears of joy could be so overpowering. But there

was more to these tears, these were tears of revelation and the revelations were just as overpowering:

*The Holy Spirit was with me. The Holy Spirit wishes to move the Church forward through us and through our child in a very human way. The Catholic faith that my parents had passed on to me and that my husband's parents had passed on to him would be passed on to our daughter by us. It was our time, our turn, and our privilege to be her Eucharistic minister. I was not only this child's mother but I was a Catholic mother and responsible to keep His Eucharist alive in her heart and offer her bread for her journey. That was my sacramental promise. That was the expectation. That was the hope of the Holy Spirit.*

Time stood still, but the revelations continued. It was clear that I was on a new faith journey and it was already proving to be transformative. I felt a paradigm shift so incredibly powerful regarding my role in our Church, from receiver of the Eucharist to bestower of the Eucharist. I was now moving His bread forward into a new generation.

Suddenly, I remember being startled when people were already filing out of the pews for communion. I was still so filled with emotion and His grace, I wondered how could make it up the aisle. I wasn't ready, and yet I also knew that not going to communion was not an option. I needed Holy Communion. I needed to receive the Eucharist for the first time as a new mother with my baby in my arms. I needed to thank God and I needed to let Him know that I understood and that I would honor His hopes as best I could.

As I made my way up the side aisle, I tried to cradle the baby with my head down, again hoping no one would notice the emotion on my face. The revelations just kept coming.

*There I was, standing there with all my flaws, holding the most perfect gift ever and about to receive His most perfect gift, the Eucharist. The communion of those gifts was magnificent.*

I heard the priest say, "The Body of Christ." I looked up, fearing that if I uttered "Amen" a wail so loud, so tender, so powerful might escape, so I nodded. But I nodded with conviction, and everything about that silent gesture was profound. It was as if I renewed all of my sacramental vows: baptism, Reconciliation, first communion, confirmation, and marriage in this one moment.

Honestly, I wasn't convinced that I could do what God was asking me to do. But I was convinced that He thought I could. I knew that from that moment forward, each time I received the Eucharist, I would forever be reminded that He was with me on this journey, that He trusts me and that He believes in me. By receiving the Eucharist, I was also acknowledging and honoring my promise to Him that we would continue to hand on our Catholic faith and my actions and examples would bring the Eucharist to life for our children, His children.

Over the next five years we would return to St. Mary's Chapel on the way home from the hospital three more times, after giving birth to three more daughters. Each time the tears flowed, but I understood their presence, His presence, and I was prepared enough to bring tissues. With each visit we grew stronger in our faith and more confident in our sacramental convictions as parents to share with our children the gift of our faith, hoping that one day our daughters would do the same if they had children.

As our girls have grown, we have tried to help them see the Eucharist as a source of spiritual nourishment and strength. One of our daughters calls the Eucharist her "Jesus vitamin" while another (our daughter with the sweet tooth) calls it her "Lord cookie." Those words tell us that they view the Eucharist with great affection and that they understand in their own way its power. But it is harder for them fully to understand that they can find the gifts of the Eucharist in friendship, compassion, forgiveness, and sacrifice. Or that as God reveals Himself to us through the Eucharist and through His radiant light we become our best selves. These revelations will take time and that is all part of their journey.

Sure, there are many times when I find myself wondering if we are doing enough to teach our children all that they should know about the Eucharist and our Catholic faith, but those are also the times that I am comforted by the revelation that some of the most profound and lasting lessons our children will learn will be from the Holy Spirit and through their personal faith experiences in their own life feast.

KAREN KIEFER is the Director of the Church in the 21st Century Center.



# A MOTHER HANDS ON THE EUCHARIST

“The family is called to the temple, or the house of prayer: a simple prayer, full of effort and tenderness. A prayer that makes life so that life becomes prayer.”  
—Saint John Paul II

## Summary

In this reflection, author Karen Kiefer recounts her experience at Mass after giving birth to her first child, including receiving the profound revelation that God was asking her to pass on the faith to her new family. For Kiefer, the Eucharist became something she needed to receive and pass on. She explores how parents are called to share their love of the faith with their children and then allow them the freedom to have their own journey with God.

## Questions for Conversation

- What are some faith traditions, beliefs, and practices that your family has passed down to you? Have you passed any on to family or friends?
- The Catholic faith teaches that parents are the primary educators of their children in the faith. What did you parents teach you about God? Have you had other important “faith teachers” on your journey? Who are they?
- Every week at Mass, the Catholic community gathers together at the Eucharist, not only as members of the same church, but as “brothers and sisters.” How do you experience being a part of the family that is the Catholic Church?

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## GATHERING PRAYER

### Be With Us Today

*St Thomas More (1478-1535)*

Father in heaven,  
you have given us a mind to know you,  
a will to serve you,  
and a heart to love you.

Be with us today in all that we do,  
so that your light may shine out in our lives.  
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

For more information about Faith Feeds, visit [bc.edu/c21](https://bc.edu/c21)

This program is sponsored by Boston College's Church in the 21st Century Center, a catalyst and a resource for the renewal of the Catholic Church.

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