

***ON FIRE WITH FAITH***

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**FORMING  
ADULT  
DISCIPLES**



**LEADER'S GUIDE**

**PLEASE NOTE:** This leader's guide was originally written for those using this video program in its VHS format. Those now using this program on DVD may find some references that do not apply to their use (i.e., directions for locating segments, time notations, etc.). We trust that both VHS- and DVD-users will find this guide a valuable resource.

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### ***Catholic Update Video***

The Use of Video in Faith Formation 4

Introduction to the Series 6

### **ON FIRE WITH FAITH FORMING ADULT DISCIPLES**

Overview of the Program 9

Audience 11

Small Group Process 12

*Introduction* by Bishop Donald Wuerl 14

#### *Story Segment*

Summary 15

Suggestions for Use 17

Questions for Sharing 19

#### *Witness Segment*

Summary 20

Suggestions for Use 22

Questions for Sharing 23

#### *Teaching Segment*

Summary 23

Suggestions for Use 25

Questions for Sharing 26

#### *Musical Reflection Segment*

Summary 26

Suggestions for Use 27

Resources for Further Study 29

## ***CATHOLIC UPDATE VIDEO***

### **The Use of Video in Faith Formation**

Jesus used the “media” of his day to teach. He was a master storyteller. His preaching is full of imagery. His parables are calculated to engage his audience. Through the ages, Christian teachers and preachers have followed Jesus in the creative proclamation of his message.

From the culture of Jesus’ time, heavily dependent on *oral communication*—to the advent of *print communication*—to our own time and its dependence on *electronic media*—Christian teachers have adapted their proclamation to each new medium and its particular demands.

Media scholars like Marshall McLuhan remind us of the impact of the medium on the message it carries. *How* we communicate affects what we communicate. Electronic media offer us new ways to tell the story of our faith. Father Pierre Babin points out (see *The New Era in Religious Communications*, Pierre Babin with Mercedes Iannone, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1991) that the message, as well as the sender and receiver, all will be re-shaped in the telling.

Catechesis, as a part of the total evangelization process, must touch the learners’ hearts and shine the light of faith on their lives. It must connect to the learners’ experience or risk being discarded as irrelevant. To be effective, catechists must learn how to make the best use of the electronic media available in our culture, aware of the particular medium’s strengths and weaknesses.

Video is a very popular, familiar and accessible part of our electronic culture. It draws us in, captures our imaginations and touches us on a deep, emotional level.

As it speaks to our experience and utilizes several of our senses, its message is more likely to be heard and remembered. By integrating quality video programs into the catechetical process, catechists can share the message more effectively.

At the same time, as television becomes a more pervasive part of our lives, we can be lulled into thinking that it can do everything for us—inform, entertain, shop, even worship. The reality is that it can't and shouldn't do everything. As Pierre Babin emphasizes, electronic media function differently than print media. They appeal first to the emotional content of our faith rather than the intellectual content. Video cannot begin to convey the amount of information print can. It cannot replace the live presence and personal witness of the catechist. But in a catechetical setting, it can be a powerful part of the “mix of media” used in proclaiming the message.

How effectively video—or any electronic media—is used in the catechetical setting depends primarily on how prepared the catechist is to use it:

- A preview of the video is essential to determine the best use of the program with a particular group.
- The catechist should select a video program (or section of a video) based on the audience, the purpose, and the availability of competent teachers and other resources and activities to support the theme.
- Sufficient time should be available to introduce the video and to process the viewing experience.

Catechists must realize that they control the use of video in their sessions. They might approach a video program in one of two ways: as a skeleton on which to build a presentation or as a way to “enflesh” an existing skeleton.

A video program well-tailored to the needs of a group might be used in its entirety. At other times, catechists may creatively manipulate the video to fit their needs:

- An excerpt may be taken from a longer piece to illustrate a point.
- A video may be shown with the *sound off* to highlight an aspect of the program.
- The “pause” button can be used freely to interject explanations and examples or to elicit reactions.
- The program or excerpt may be repeated to emphasize a point.

The producers of this video program have attempted to craft both medium and message with an awareness of the power of the medium as well as its limitations. They encourage those who use it to study this guide and become familiar with ways to allow this program to supplement their own sharing of the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

### **Introduction to the Series**

*Catholic Update Video* is a video resource designed for use in the RCIA, catechist formation, sacrament programs for parents, faith-sharing groups, study groups, ministry training and high school religious education. *Catholic Update Video* draws from Catholic life and practice to present a single topic in a “video toolbox” format with four distinct segments—story, witness, teaching and musical reflection.

*Catholic Update Video* has been designed with today’s learner in mind. Its segments are short and can stand alone or be used with others in the program. The format is flexible, making it useful in a variety of group settings as well as for individual viewing. The emphasis is on what video can do best, namely touch us through

story (story segment), testimony (witness segment) and song (musical reflection segment) with images and the emotions they carry. But a more “didactic” approach (teaching segment) respects the need to convey a concise core of information.

The general model for catechetical process (life experience, message or doctrine, response) is respected by the order of the four segments, although at times a catechist may choose to use them alone or out of sequence:

- Each program begins with a **story segment** designed to draw viewers in and help them connect their life-experience to the faith-topic.
- The testimony of real-life Catholics in the **witness segment** helps viewers reflect on their own life experience and prepare for group sharing.
- Our teacher briefly highlights some aspects of the topic in the **teaching segment**. Relevant images help to illustrate the points being made. *(This segment is not intended to treat a topic exhaustively nor substitute for a more thorough presentation on the message or doctrine.)*
- Viewers are invited to respond in prayer using the **musical reflection segment**.

The program’s host provides a context for each segment. This is designed to help viewers who will see the program from beginning to end. Catechists who use segments individually or out of sequence may wish to prepare their own lead-in. On-screen graphics provide viewers with a question for reflection or sharing between segments.

This leader’s guide is an important tool for making the best use of this video program.

It includes the following features.

- **Summary and Suggestions for Use** for each segment.
- **Questions for Sharing** for the story, witness and teaching segments; facilitators can choose from them or use them as models for developing their own questions.
- **Suggestions for Use** for the musical reflection segment provide suggestions for using this segment in a prayer setting.
- **Resources for Further Study** are listed at the end of this guide.
- **Approximate times** are noted for where each segment begins. *(If the VCR is equipped with an “elapsed time” counter, reset the counter to 0:00:00 at the beginning of the tape and fast-forward to the time listed for the beginning of the desired segment. If the VCR does not have an “elapsed time” counter, the facilitator can fast-forward in the “review” mode [i.e., while the VCR is in “play”] to find the gray screen and Catholic Update Video logo that indicate the start of a segment.)*

## ***ON FIRE WITH FAITH*** **FORMING ADULT DISCIPLES**

### **Overview of the Program**

In 1999, the U. S. Catholic bishops approved *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States*. While many people in the pew may not have heard of that event, those in parish leadership need to be familiar with the bishops' plan. Its purpose is to awaken "*a passion for renewal in the ministry of adult faith formation*" (24).

The bishops are asking us to broaden our perspective of adult faith formation. Formation in the faith must be a lifelong adventure. It's not finished when we complete school or celebrate the sacraments of initiation. It's not just for children or youth. The work of formation isn't just a task for the clergy. Nor are we restricted in our learning to Sunday Mass or the programs at our parish.

Adult faith formation happens whenever and wherever Christians pause to reflect on our encounters with Jesus Christ. That can occur in the midst of daily life, as we struggle with birth and death, suffering and healing, tragedies on the personal or global level. We may learn lessons in the most unlikely places, in the midst of the most unexpected events.

One of the most dynamic stories in the Gospels (Luke 24: 13-35) tells of two disciples who are leaving Jerusalem in grief and despair after the crucifixion and death of Jesus. All their hopes have ended in the tragedy of Good Friday.

A stranger meets them and asks why they are so troubled. He seems unaware of the events that have

occurred in Jerusalem. When the two disciples explain, the stranger begins to speak to them about how the death of Jesus is the fulfillment of what the Scriptures had promised about the Messiah.

The disciples are mesmerized by this stranger and his powerful words. They invite him to stay with them overnight, and—as they break the bread of their evening meal—he is revealed to them as the risen Christ.

*Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, the title of the bishops' pastoral plan, is how the two disciples describe their experience of encountering the risen Christ.

In the plan, the bishops tell us that this story “offers us a model for our ministry and shows the need we all have for ongoing formation in faith” (12). It portrays Jesus as the ideal minister of adult faith formation, listening to the disciples and accompanying them on the road of life. It also portrays how we are formed in faith: like the two disciples we encounter “the risen Lord, grow stronger in love, knowledge, commitment, and zeal (12).”

In this *Catholic Update Video*, we offer two versions of that story from Luke's Gospel. In our *story segment*, we retell it in a contemporary drama. A Catholic couple finds themselves spiritually “on the road,” grieving over the changes about to occur in their parish. Their Catholic identity and faith are challenged. But along that road they meet Christ—in the person of fellow Christians who help them unfold the deeper meaning of their experience.

Our *music video reflection* will also present Luke's story, using Gospel images and contemporary scenes to connect you to the variety of ways we can be formed as adult disciples and develop living, explicit and fruitful faith (45-63).

We've gathered real-life Catholics to talk about the

five concrete approaches to adult faith formation highlighted in the bishops' plan (97-112). In our *witness segment*, they share their experiences of these different approaches.

To introduce the vision of this pastoral plan, we've asked Bishop Donald W. Wuerl of Pittsburgh, who served as chair of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Education, to open this program.

Dr. Matt Hayes, a leader in adult faith formation, presents the *teaching segment*. He draws on his experience to help you translate the bishops' plan into practical terms for your parish.

One final note. This program is not intended to present the bishops' plan in all its specifics. Your parish will discover the riches in the plan as you study it in depth. We hope to offer you—in video form—a “spark of the Spirit.” May it set your own hearts on fire as you assist your brothers and sisters in growing as adult disciples of Jesus Christ.

## **Audience**

This program is intended for an adult audience. Its primary audience is parish leaders charged with implementing the *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us* pastoral plan.

The *story* and *witness segments* may be used within adult faith formation offerings on the themes of

- journey of faith,
- Emmaus story and
- adult discipleship.

The *story segment* may also be useful in times of change in a Church community—change of pastor, closing of parish or school, etc.

## Small Group Process

While some groups may choose to use the segments in separate sessions, we provide here a sample outline for a small group process incorporating all four of the video segments into a single session. This outline is designed to help volunteer catechists/facilitators who may need assistance in planning group sessions and for those professionals who like to adapt a sample plan to meet their own needs.

## Suggested Process

- 1. Setting the Environment**—Ask each participant to produce (from their person, wallet or purse) a symbol of an adult responsibility (e.g., driver's license, wedding ring, voter registration card, photo of aged parents, photo of young children) and place it on a central table already set with a Bible, lit candle, small tree branch and a copy of *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*.
- 2. Gathering**—Invite participants to gather around the table for an opening prayer or song. Choose a song familiar to the participants on the theme of journey, discipleship or evangelization. Use the following or similar opening prayer: *We gather as adult disciples of Jesus desiring to grow closer to Christ and the Church. We are adults with all of the responsibilities that come with adulthood. These sometimes distract us from our focus on growing as people of faith. We ask God to help us as we gather—to see that Christian discipleship calls us to grow and be formed in the faith in and through all that makes up our lives as adults.*

### **3. Sharing My Story**

- Invite personal reflection and group sharing on the question “What life moments have opened you most to learning more about God, your faith or Christian discipleship?”
- Show the *story segment* and invite participants to name the events and people who help Frank and Joanna open themselves to growing as adult disciples. What other things help you do this?
- Show the *witness segment* and ask participants to share about their own experiences of intentional adult faith formation. Ask “What resources or settings have been meaningful to you in your formation as an adult disciple?”

**4. Relating My Story to the Church’s Story**—Show *teaching segment* and discuss the climate and needs of the parish. Use the reproducible handout on page 18 to help in this assessment. Ask “How well is our parish already tending its tree of adult faith formation?” “What are the strengths of our parish climate? the weaknesses?” and “What does our parish need to do in order to implement the bishops’ plan?”

**5. Responding in Life and Faith**—Use the *musical reflection segment* “We Walk on With Jesus” as a closing prayer. (If time permits, consider using or modifying the sample prayer experience outlined on page 27 of this guide.) Close with the “Our Father” and invite them to come forward to retrieve their symbols of adult responsibility. Send them forth with the words from our eucharistic liturgy, “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”

## **Introduction**

Bishop Donald Wuerl of Pittsburgh, chair of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Education at the time of the writing of *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, offers an introduction to the bishops' plan including comments on the context in which the document was written. He refers to cultural and societal challenges adults face today that make nurturing our faith as adults all the more important. Some of the challenges he mentions include a secular and materialistic society.

He speaks of the teaching of Christ and his Church as "opportunities" for responding to the needs of life and for making a renewed and personal commitment to Christ. This brings us to our neighborhood Church, our parish. He says, "It's in the parish that most of us live out our experience of Christ, his Church and all the things that are a part of it."

The bishops' plan sets a goal of nurturing adults who have living, explicit and fruitful faith. Living faith is personal; it's caught up in who we are and what we do. Explicit faith understands what the Church teaches, what the Gospel proclaims, what our Catholic faith is. Fruitful faith overflows into acts of compassion, justice and evangelization.

Bishop Wuerl ends his introduction with "hope that this pastoral plan will be for you a moment of encouragement, a moment of renewal, a moment of seeing your faith come alive all over again."

## **Story Segment**

### **“On the Way: An Emmaus Journey”**

*(Begins approximately 8:23 into program.)*

## **Summary**

*The story segment retells Luke’s account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus in a contemporary drama. When a Catholic couple’s identity and faith are challenged by a crisis, three encounters—with neighbors, a friend and a child—help them meet Christ “along the way.” They experience a change of heart that enlivens their faith and opens them to the action of God’s Spirit.*

Frank and Joanna Ferguson have been members of St. Teresita’s parish for 30 years. They are understandably upset to learn that their parish is soon to close. Industrial development in the neighborhood has caused their numbers and resources to dwindle. They are distressed and deeply saddened. While their pastor encourages them to see this as a new opportunity, they struggle to see beyond their loss.

Frank and Joanna return home after Sunday Mass so absorbed in their own troubles that they don’t even notice their new neighbors coming over to meet them. They enter their home and begin preparing a simple lunch.

Their discussion during lunch reveals several layers of challenge in this new and unwelcome reality. Joanna wonders what will become of their beloved church building and suggests they do something to stop the changes. Frank takes the practical view, realizing that the decisions have already been made. He offers a glimpse into his own personal struggle when he says that, despite their Catholic education and faithful Mass participation, “Nothing prepared us for this.” Concerns

about starting over and personal prejudice about the nearly all-black neighboring parish also come out in their conversation.

The doorbell interrupts their conversation. Their new neighbors have come over to introduce themselves. Paul and Allison, a young black couple, are hoping to put down roots, get involved in a Church community and grow their family after moving several times for work. They are enthusiastic about what new opportunities are ahead for them.

We next see Joanna visiting her friend Elena in a nursing care facility. Elena has broken her hip and had to move from her home. She is positive about the experience although she admits she misses her old home. She shares that the framed Scripture passage on her wall, a gift from Joanna, has helped her through the challenges and changes in her life. The passage is Romans 8:28 “All things work for good for those who love God.”

Frank has a conversation about change, fear and God’s care with a young student in a faith formation class. The young boy is drawing a picture of Abraham and Sarah journeying to their new home. He tells Frank that even though they were probably frightened, God will take care of them—just like God took care of him when he was frightened on a camping trip.

Frank and Joanna both have some things to reflect on in the week following the announcement of their church’s closing. Frank reaches out to their new neighbors. Joanna spends some time alone with her Bible, looking up passages their pastor had offered to help parishioners through this time of change. She reflects not only on the Scripture passages but also on the ways that God has been revealed through conversation with the new neighbors and her friend Elena.

Frank and Joanna next appear at Sunday Mass one week after the announcement of the impending church

closing. The Gospel is the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus after the crucifixion of Jesus. We see that Frank and Joanna are seated next to their new neighbors. The young boy from Frank's faith formation class is also there with his family. Elena is in her wheelchair nearby. As they receive Communion, Frank and Joanna appear to experience an acceptance and change of heart.

As they leave the church after Mass, Joanna introduces Paul and Allison to their pastor. She also tells Father Alfredo that she and Frank will serve on the transition committee to help the community through the changes ahead.

### **Suggestions for Use**

This story is about two adults who come to realize that Jesus speaks to them in a time of crisis through other people and through the Scriptures. They find out that, despite their many years of life experience and faithful involvement in a Church community, God continually calls them to growth in faith and understanding.

This story is much more than the context of the crisis Frank and Joanna are dealing with. We caution viewers not to allow the church closure to distract them from focusing on the ways the Fergusons respond to this challenge and grow in their faith.

This story is a modern-day retelling of Jesus' appearance on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). It may be used with groups exploring the meaning of this Gospel story or the themes of faith journey, adult discipleship and Eucharist. Parish leaders may use this in the training of the adult faith formation teams recommended in *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*. Other uses include helping parish leaders and parishioners deal with a time of change (e.g., change of pastor, closing of the parish school, closing of the

# LOOKING AT THE FOREST

## ASSESSING THE SETTING FOR MATURE FAITH DEVELOPMENT

What does mature faith look like? *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us* describes mature adult faith and discipleship as faith that is living, explicit and fruitful (45-63). Explore what these characteristics mean and consider how well your community supports their development and expression.

1. Indicate below where your parish falls on the continuum of support for adult faith formation:

The way liturgy is celebrated

supports fully 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 does not support at all \_\_\_\_\_

The content of the homilies

supports fully 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 does not support at all \_\_\_\_\_

The organizational structure

supports fully 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 does not support at all \_\_\_\_\_

Budget allocations

supports fully 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 does not support at all \_\_\_\_\_

The environment (interior, exterior) where people meet

supports fully 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 does not support at all \_\_\_\_\_

Types of activities and programs

supports fully 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 does not support at all \_\_\_\_\_

The nature and extent of lay involvement

supports fully 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 does not support at all \_\_\_\_\_

Parish staff style of leadership

supports fully 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 does not support at all \_\_\_\_\_

Welcoming and incorporating new members into the parish

supports fully 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 does not support at all \_\_\_\_\_

2. Account for your score by listing two or three examples for each.

3. Mark those areas that you can influence with an \*.

4. Focus on two areas marked with an \* and brainstorm strategies for making them more supportive of mature faith development.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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parish, etc.) and advocating for greater attention and resources for parish adult faith formation efforts.

This story will help viewers get in touch with their own “Road to Emmaus” story. Every adult has encountered life events that have challenged faith, and occasions when Jesus has spoken through other people and experiences. Viewers may come to realize that these life moments are opportunities to grow in faith and, with reflection and the use of good resources, can lead to greater formation in the faith. It also conveys the message that our formation is lifelong.

Use this segment to invite sharing by participants about the variety of ways they have been formed in the faith and the life moments that found them most open to and hungry for faith formation opportunities. The following or similar questions may help viewers reflect and share.

### **Questions for Sharing**

1. What personal crisis also challenged your faith or former way of looking at things? What was your response to this crisis? How did you grow through it?
2. How have you grown in faith as an adult?
3. What life moments have opened you most to learning more about God, your faith or Christian discipleship?
4. When have you experienced God speaking to you through other people? What was your response?
5. When have you discovered that God was speaking to another through your words or actions?
6. In what ways do you still need to be formed in the faith?

## **Witness Segment**

*(Begins approximately 20:05 into program.)*

### **Summary**

*In their plan for adult faith formation, the U.S. bishops recognize that parishes must “provide a variety of learning activities and resources to meet the diverse needs of parishioners” (98). This translates into five “concrete approaches.” They’re probably familiar to you if you’ve been involved in any way with adults in parish settings. Catholics from Corpus Christi Church in Stone Mountain, Georgia, share their experiences of faith formation—in each of these five approaches.*

**Liturgy:** “Each aspect of worship...has the potential to foster adult faith” (101).

- I like to be at Mass when all the people are participating...it’s wonderful to pray with a group that responds with one voice.
- I get a lot out of seeing everyone receive Communion. I also like the sense of community that comes with the Sign of Peace.
- Mass is healing for me. It takes away my worries. I lift up as much as I can to the Lord.
- I like worshipping with people with like beliefs.

**Small Groups:** “...provide genuine support to people in living their faith in daily life” (105).

- I’m a small group person. I enjoy the sharing because there’s a genuine love in our community.
- It’s more personal. You get close because it’s a small group.
- We share personal celebrations and hard times. Everyone opens up.

- If there is a group, it's great. If not, my heart will be yearning for something like that.
- They were liberals and conservatives, and all were committed in their faith. It was a challenge to me, and I grew in my religious views.
- Prayer community is teaching us to grow through coming together in love and worshiping. It has made us stronger and richer.

***Family- or Home-Centered Activities:*** “There may be no place more significant for catechesis than the family” (102).

- We start each day reading the Bible or books of the saints and then we pray spontaneously.
- We enjoy our parish's family religious education. After Mass and a meal they have a program for the adults and then the children's religious education and teen program. It's something we've been able to do together as a family, then meet with the community of the parish and share faith with others.
- There are ways to pray through actions too. Our family has adopted a refugee family and visit an elderly couple.
- God and family is what life is all about.

***Individual Activities:*** “...can lead to a deepened faith and a more active Christian witness” (110).

- God is walking with me through whatever troubles I'm going through. I know that I always have a companion beside me.
- I pray silently in the adoration chapel, praise and worship, pray the rosary, offer my own personal prayers and pray the Way of the Cross.

- Sometimes I pray when I'm driving or whenever it hits the need.
- I start by praising. I sing aloud for the first five minutes and then offer praise. After praising, I give thanks for life, opportunities, love—for everything.
- I pray each morning and at night before I go to bed. Any time I have spare time, I spend it reading the word of the Lord, trying to learn more about the faith.

**Large Groups:** “Some adults prefer to learn in large group settings” (107).

- Our adult sessions often convey what's happening in our lives. You learn from others as they share their problems and ways that Christ touches them.
- We have a lecture every night for the adults. We have about 50 to 70 people every time. It keeps the community growing and not just coming to Mass, leaving and going home. We've met more friends and become more involved in the Church too.

### **Suggestions for Use**

Different learning styles and personalities will respond differently to each of these approaches. Steer the initial sharing away from judgments or comments about the merit and/or challenges of the different approaches. First use this segment to help viewers share about their own experiences of adult formation in a variety of settings. This segment may be used later to initiate discussion about the five concrete approaches and help in planning for variety in adult faith formation efforts. This segment may also accompany training of an adult faith formation team on the subject of adult learning needs and methods.

### **Questions for Sharing**

1. How do you learn best?
2. What learning situations are more difficult or challenging for you?
3. What resources or settings have been meaningful to you in your formation as an adult disciple?
4. How can you achieve a balance of individual and communal experiences of prayer and formation in your own life? in your parish?

### **Teaching Segment**

*(Begins approximately 25:35 into program.)*

### **Summary**

*In the teaching segment, Dr. Matthew J. Hayes, a pioneer in the field of adult faith formation, talks about the importance of nurturing adult faith and the pivotal role of the parish in this effort. Dr. Hayes has worked in adult faith formation for over 20 years. He's helped Catholic parishes assess their needs and shape approaches to nurture mature Christian faith. Although his day job is behind a desk or in a teaching environment, he draws his central image for the teaching segment from his hobby of nurturing growth of a different kind: apple trees.*

**I. The growth and care of trees provides an analogy for parish adult faith formation.**

- A. Gardeners know what a tree’s silhouette should look like in winter in order to be full of fruit in the fall and what steps to take in the spring and summer growing seasons.
- B. Sometimes trees grow and produce fruit with little care, like a “volunteer” apple tree on the rocky shore of Lake Michigan. A little care might result in abundant fruit from such trees. (Note: a “volunteer” tree is one that was not purposely planted by human hands.)
- C. A “Timber Stand Improvement Plan” is a plan to enhance the growth of standing timber.

**II. A parish can do some things to enhance the growth of its tree of adult faith formation.**

- A. Adult faith formation takes place in the climate of the parish. If the parish climate is good, the tree can become vigorous and fruitful.
  - 1. The U.S. bishops’ pastoral plan for adult faith formation, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, says, “The Parish Is the Curriculum” (118).
  - 2. Many aspects of the parish, not only adult faith formation programs, nurture adult faith.
- B. Gardeners know what a good winter shape is and prune to make it happen. A Timber Stand Improvement Plan for adult faith formation should have as its goal mature Catholic faith. *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us* lists three qualities of mature adult faith and discipleship.
  - 1. Living
  - 2. Explicit
  - 3. Fruitful

**III. *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us* is a Timber Stand Improvement Plan for adult faith formation.**

- A. A parish can use the plan's basic steps to both evaluate and give direction to its adult faith formation efforts.
  - 1. Ownership at the top
  - 2. Designation of an adult faith formation leader
  - 3. Core team of parishioners
  - 4. Trained catechists for adults
  - 5. Space
  - 6. Programs and learning opportunities
  - 7. Resources
- B. A Timber Stand Improvement Plan for a parish should include two perspectives.
  - 1. The wide approach looks at the overall climate of the forest in fostering maturity in adult faith.
  - 2. The focused approach looks at specifics such as content and approaches.

**IV. Every mighty oak begins as a tiny acorn. Fostering adult faith formation is a ministry of faith and hope.**

- A. We must keep faith in the power and presence of the Spirit in the life of each individual.
- B. We must keep hope that small efforts today will, with the Spirit's help, produce fruit-full results for future generations.

**Suggestions for Use**

Dr. Hayes offers a very tangible analogy for faith formation and lays groundwork for a study of the bishops' plan. This segment may be used within

formation of parish leaders and adult faith formation teams—either as an introduction to the plan or as a summary of the plan that may help a group move from study to implementation. Use of the reproducible assessment tool “Looking at the Forest: Assessing the Setting for Mature Faith Development” created by Dr. Hayes may help in this process. It is found on pages 18-19 of this guide.

### **Questions for Sharing**

1. Dr. Hayes uses the analogy of tending and nurturing trees for a parish’s fostering of adult faith formation efforts. How can you apply this analogy to your personal growth in faith?
2. How well is your parish already tending its tree of adult faith formation?
3. What are the strengths of your parish climate? the weaknesses?
4. What does your parish need to do in order to implement the bishops’ plan?

### **Musical Reflection Segment**

*(Begins approximately 34:11 into program.)*

### **Summary**

*The program concludes with a music video segment, an original song that retells the Emmaus story and highlights the characteristics—living, explicit and fruitful—of mature adult faith and discipleship. Its reverent melody and use of Gospel images and contemporary scenes connect viewers to the variety of ways we can be formed as adult disciples and develop living, explicit and fruitful faith.*

Written shortly after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, “We Walk on With Jesus” helps us connect our personal tragedies and national concerns to the experience of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. They were troubled and confused by the crucifixion of Jesus, the man in whom they had placed their hope.

Each of us experiences times of trouble and confusion in the everyday and not-so-everyday occurrences of life. These “life moments” often find us acknowledging our personal weakness and need for God. It is at these times that we often are most open and interested in learning and growth. Reflection, study and sharing about these experiences can lead us to new understandings of ourselves, others, our world, our faith and God.

The refrain of the song suggests that as we engage with our life experiences, we can become open to growth in faith as described in the U.S. bishops’ plan—living, explicit and fruitful.

### **Suggestions for Use**

This segment may be used as part of a prayer experience. An outline of a sample prayer service follows.

1. Open the prayer by inviting those gathered to  
*“Imagine being a close disciple of Jesus as you leave Jerusalem after his death and before you comprehend his resurrection. Imagine your fear and despair, the grief you feel about losing a beloved friend and teacher as well as hope in his message and teaching. You are exhausted after nights awake in worry and confusion. Finally, dejected, you are returning home...”*
2. Allow a few moments for reflection.

3. *“Now think of a time in your own lives when you were like the disciples on the road to Emmaus. It’s where many of us have found ourselves in the past and will likely find ourselves again next week or someday in the future, maybe even today—carrying the concerns and burdens of daily life with us. Sometimes these burdens are very heavy with the weight of our own illness, the death of a loved one, the loss of a job or a troubling world event. Other times we are heavy from daily challenges and concerns that, when combined, weigh us down and make everyday life feel like more of a burden than a blessing...”*
4. Allow a few moments for reflection.
5. Scripture: Luke 24:13-35
6. Invite sharing about a time when it became clear that Jesus had been traveling with you along a difficult part of life’s path. Ask “How did Jesus reveal himself to you?” and “What difference does it make to know that the risen Christ shares our journeys?”
7. Introduce the music video with the following or similar words, *“Open your heart now to the presence of Jesus—for he has promised to go before us, and to meet us there, on the road, and in the breaking of the bread. As we journey with him, may all of our hearts be set “on fire with faith.” View the music video segment “We Walk on With Jesus.”*
8. Close by joining hands and praying “Our Father...” and then offering each other a sign of peace.

## **RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY**

**1. Scripture references:** Luke 24:13-35 (The Appearance on the Road to Emmaus); Romans 8:28 (“All things work for good for those who love God.”)

**2. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* references:** catechesis (4-10); catechesis and the liturgy (1074-75); Christ as the heart of catechesis (426-29, 1698); exercise of catechesis by the laity (906); exercise of catechesis in preaching and teaching (2033); catechesis in the family (2226); task of catechesis (1697, 2688)

**3) Available from St. Anthony Messenger Press:**

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