

Stages of Family Growth Lifecycle

(Courtesy of National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers)

A useful aide-memoir to any church wanting to do something for the family - *let us know* if you have something to add to this...

Stage	Reward	Challenge	Spiritual Task	Parish/Diocesan Resources
Courtship & Marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Couple time * Romance * Freedom * Intimacy/belonging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Emancipation from family of origin * Adjustment to living together: sex, marital chastity, money, lifestyle, friends, work, religion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Develop couple spiritually - entering the "covenant" relationship * Discuss, detect faith differences * Finding or forming "church" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Annual renewal of marriage vows, retreats * Marriage enrichment programs * Marriage preparation programs * Young marrieds programs * Interfaith marriage ministry * Second marriage preparation * Natural family planning
First child in home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Generativity * Joy in watching child develop * Enriched identity as a family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Less couple time * Less personal freedom * New roles * Develop new relationship to extended family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Expand to family spirituality * Develop religious traditions/rituals * Re-evaluate church membership * Awareness of vocation of parenting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Marriage enrichment * Baptismal preparation program * Baptismal follow-up and support groups * Family prayer materials * Media awareness training * Values education (peace & justice) * Parish parenting program/network * Christian sexuality materials/media
Last child enters school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Shared responsibility in the home * Mother's world expands * Joy in watching child develop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * School and outside activities pull family apart * Responsibility of being primary religion and sex educators * Adults dealing with mid-life issues, perhaps addictions or family of origin issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Pass on faith to children through traditions/rituals/prayers/stories * Plug into larger church community for support * Relational spirituality of home (spiritual/corporeal works of mercy) * Family as "servant" community * Making peace with family of origin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Marriage enrichment * Ministry to hurting marriages * Divorce ministry * Single-parent network * Parenting classes * Family prayer materials * Media awareness training * Values education (peace & justice) * Christian sexuality materials/media * Family retreats * Education in family as "vocation" * Ministry for children with losses
Adolescence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Joy in watching child develop * Beginning of new kind of relationships in family * Increasing independence and competence in children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Challenge to parental authority (negotiating) * "Middle-escence" meets adolescence * Less time with extended family * Continued mid-life challenge in marriage relationship and with extended family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Letting go of children while maintaining family unity and values * Co-operation with larger church for adolescent faith development programs * New forms of family prayer and recreation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Marriage enrichment * Ministry to hurting marriages * Parenting teens material * Drug, alcohol, sex education support groups * Youth ministry * Ministry to teens with losses * Media awareness training * Parish parents support systems
Letting go	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Friendship with children * Entry of caretakers into new arenas (career, volunteer) * More time with spouse, friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Renegotiating couple relationship * Caring for own parents * Extra financial burdens * Breaking continuity of family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Letting go, "healing the dream" * Redefining spirituality of couple 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Bereavement ministry * Marriage enrichments * Ministry to struggling marriages * Support for people caring for aging parents * Support for dealing with mid-life issues * Support for widowed, separated and divorced

Empty nest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Freedom: finances and time * Children settling in * Grandchildren * Back to "coupleness" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Loneliness * Children returning home * Letting go - pain of loss (evaluating self as parent) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Emphasise personal spirituality * Exploring new opportunities * Wisdom, acceptance, trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Marriage enrichment * Support for struggling marriages * Support for widowed, separated, divorced * Celebration of aging church members * Retirement groups
Aging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Fulfillment in life * Decrease in tasks, free time * New relationship with widow/widowers, friends * Grandchildren 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Loss of energy, work, identity, health, spouse and friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Acceptance * Preparing for eternity * Emphasise personal spirituality * Wisdom, acceptance, trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Bereavement ministry * Outreach to housebound elderly * Like-to-like social group for elderly * Reminiscence opportunities for older church ministries