

Strengthening Sacramental Teaching with FORMED Resources



“Our goal is to educate the parents and to have them educate their kids.”

Jeff Reither

Director of Parish and Family Life, Church of St. Anne, Hamel, MN

Just 350 families belong to the Church of St. Anne in Hamel, Minnesota. For the past five or six years, the parish that lies 17 miles northwest of Minneapolis has had a FORMED subscription and has used the resources on formed.org to support its sacramental teaching.

“I don’t think that most people are well-educated on the sacraments,” said Jeff Reither, the parish’s director of Parish and Family Life.

While the number of families may place St. Anne among the ranks of smaller parishes, many of its families are large. The century-old church is the site of multiple Baptisms each year.

Whether a family is having its first or its eighth child baptized, the parish requires parents to watch **REBORN**. The video series’ three sessions present the foundation of the Church’s teaching on Baptism, explaining the rite step-by-step and identifying Baptism’s place in Scripture and Tradition.

“We can’t say it better than **REBORN** does,” Reither said.

As those babies grow up and reach the ages for First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation, the parish uses the Family Faith Formation model for sacramental preparation.

“To have the parents educated on the sacrament is crucial,” Reither said, “and to feel confident in passing that on to their kids.”



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Jeff Reither

For First Reconciliation, parents of second graders watch *Forgiven: The Transforming Power of Confession* and *Forgiven—for Parents: Preparing Your Child for First Confession*. The parish also sends parents the link for the children's *You Are Forgiven* videos. Reither calls parents each month to check in with them, to see if they're keeping pace with the program, and to ask if they have any questions.

Prior to receiving the sacrament, the children come to the church with their parents to tour the confessional, discuss what they've been learning, and ask any questions they might have.

The parish employs the same type of format for First Holy Communion with *You Are Loved* and for Confirmation with *You Are Sent*.

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The Church of St. Anne has used *BELOVED: Finding Happiness in Marriage* for the past six years. Over that time, between 120 and 130 couples have gone through the program. Engaged and married couples meet for two and a half hours on Saturdays for 12 weeks. Babysitting is provided, and the first half hour is devoted to breakfast.

"You can deal with a lot of issues in your marriage if your stomach is full of bacon," Reither said.

After breakfast, each session begins with icebreakers and prayer. Then the group watches that week's video and breaks into groups of six, based on their life experience. In groups, the participants talk and go over the study guide questions. Next, there's time for all couples to meet privately and then to return to the large group and share as much or as little as they'd like.

"Couples talk about problems," Reither said, " but BELOVED gets them to talk about their marriage."

Some couples have continued their meetings, and Reither said that the pastor has a good relationship with the couples in the program.

Perhaps the greatest testimony to the program is the couple who have been married for 56 years and have gone through BELOVED—twice.



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