

Saint Joseph's Ministry of Kentucky



St. Joseph

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www.consecrationtostjoseph.org



Resource Guide: Pro-Life Foster Care Initiative



St. Joseph Ministry of Kentucky

Please join us in supporting the nearly 10,000 children in the foster care system in Kentucky. There is a role for each of us! Our resource kit provides a process for each church to discern how their congregation can engage.

What is the St. Joseph Ministry?

The objective of the St. Joseph Ministry is to raise awareness of the many ways Christians can support children who enter the State of Kentucky, Child Protective Services (CPS) system. This awareness will be measured by the number of individuals, families and churches becoming involved in foster care and adoption. Browse the resources here and contact DCCH Center for Children and Families www.dcchcenter.org or the Covington KY Diocese Pro-Life Office for more information.

We know:

- Taking care of the orphan is a fundamental teaching of the Church.
- Being a foster/adoptive parent for children in the CPS system is very difficult. Children are often older. Regardless of age, they also often have mental, emotional, psychological, and/or physical challenges. Many have siblings also needing care and they wish to be together.
- Children in the general foster care population move on average three times because the foster family may not be adequately prepared or supported to care for them. Moving and inconsistent care can add to the trauma experienced in the original abusive environment.
- It takes a village to raise any child, but especially children who have experienced trauma. There are many roles and ways we can wrap a foster child and their families – biological, foster, and adoptive -- in a nurturing network of support.

CALL TO ACTION:

As St. Joseph accepted the task of fostering Jesus, we as Christians are called to also care for the orphan. This role can come in many forms, fostering, or adopting,

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providing respite and other supportive services to youth coming from the foster care system. It might also be as simple as praying and offering tangible gifts to a child or new foster / adoptive family when they need it the most.

1. Full-time fostering of a child for a season
2. Adopting a child or sibling group and making a lifetime commitment
3. Become a Respite Provider, Mentor or Volunteer for youth
4. Be your church contact person to help disseminate information for the St. Joseph Ministry
5. Become a prayer warrior for the child and family fostering/or adopted in your church
6. Donate goods for a new foster or adoptive family, find out if they need a bed, car seat, dresser, or some clothes/toys for the child.
7. Offer your time with tutoring a child, babysitting, or transportation to and from school or other activity, or offer a meal to a busy foster/adoptive family when most needed.
8. Make a financial donation to your local non-profit foster care or pro-life agency.

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RESOURCE GUIDE FOR PARISH LEADERS

Where to start?

This resource guide provides tools for each phase of implementing the St. Joseph Ministry into parish life. There are most likely families within the church who are already involved in every aspect of the child welfare system, but church leadership might not be fully aware of them. This can range from having been a child who was once in the Child Protection Services or being/have been foster or adoptive parents. Perhaps there are social workers, teachers, law enforcement, judicial or other professionals or volunteers who have been or are working with the CPS and foster care system.

However, often foster parents report feeling isolated or invisible in their communities. Foster children's needs can be very overwhelming, and parents do not know who or how to seek assistance from their church family. Foster parents can feel different, sometimes viewed with suspicion, or put on a pedestal and afraid to ask for help.

PHASE ONE: AWARENESS

Provide an opportunity for your church congregation to be aware of the ministry and need foster/adoptive parents and how people from the church can support those with the calling.

Evaluate

First assess what the leadership knows. This could be the pastoral staff, office, or other ministry leaders within the church. Ask:

1. Do we have any foster and adoptive parents in the congregation?
2. Who has children/grandchildren in the state child protection system? How do they or can they fit into this ministry?

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3. Do we know of grandparents with custodial rights of their grandkids?
4. Do we have anyone who works or volunteers directly with the child welfare system?
5. What other ministries do we have right now which might naturally integrate support for foster families, such as the Bereavement, St. Vincent DePaul, Social Outreach, Fellowship or Pro-life groups.
6. Ask current foster parents to complete the foster family survey

Establish a Core Committee

Provide a clear mandate to the core committee. Determine if the committee will be of support current ministries to include the care for foster children/families or if a new program would be needed and could get started.

Liturgical Awareness

Review the calendar of events and the liturgical resources for ways to incorporate prayers for foster families, and to refer to their needs in homilies.

Compassionate Awareness

Provide a training for parish clergy, staff and key volunteers on trauma informed care and the intricacies of the foster care system. Perhaps a therapist within church or general community could lend expertise. Scientifically based training increases compassion for children harmed by abuse and neglect and removed from their birth homes and placed in foster care, explains how trauma affects the brain, the behavior and self-worth of a child.

PHASE TWO: INFORMATION

By reviewing the church's annual calendar, integrating events relevant to foster families and using the resources in this guide, you will be able to keep the congregation informed of the ways they can support foster families.

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Calendar of Events – consider how the church can highlight foster care in liturgies and activities during events already happening in the life of the church. Review the calendar for special holidays or holy days for ideas.

Handouts – these can be used in meetings, bulletin inserts or distributed electronically or in other communication tools used by the church.

1. Prayer for Foster Children
2. How do children enter the foster care system?
3. What role will you play?

KAPE: Kentucky's Adoption Profile Exchange, <https://prdweb.chfs.ky.gov/kafe/index.aspx> a free photo listing with brief profiles of KY children waiting for an adoptive family.

Presentations: DCCH staff will gladly offer support with more information, answering questions or setting up a time to speak to anyone or group within the church to further explain the needs and process of the St. Joseph Ministry and children cared for within the system.

PHASE THREE: NON-DIRECT ENGAGEMENT

This is the easiest level of engagement and allows for the greatest number of people to become involved. There is little or no direct contact with children in foster care. The commitment is typically short term or one time. Current ministries within the church may be able to integrate this engagement into already existing programs.

While the state of KY and DCCH provide reimbursement to foster parents for their time and expenses, it is not always enough to cover all the basics for the child.

Implementation of non-direct engagement will have the greatest impact if it is used to guide people to a deeper level of engagement with children and their families in the child welfare

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protection system. Opportunities for reflection and renewal should be provided to all involved with this level.

Examples of NON-DIRECT engagement:

1. Prayer
2. New material goods: Abused and neglected children do not deserve abused and neglected items. Perhaps helping a foster family with purchasing some new items –
 - a. Clothes & shoes
 - b. Gifts for birthdays and holidays
 - c. School supplies
 - d. Blankets, bedding room decorations, beds, or dressers
 - e. Car seats, portable play pens
 - f. Diapers
 - g. Formula
 - h. Personal hygiene products
3. Other material support could be tuition assistance if the family chooses to send the child to private school.
4. Services such as meals, haircuts or styling, home repairs, cleaning or vehicle maintenance, services for special events such as proms, holidays birthdays etc.
5. Support groups for birth parents, social workers and material help for birth family clients
6. Provide meeting space, refreshments for classes and meetings
7. Material support for older youth, 18-21, entering Independent Living programs, this can include apt furnishings, help with securing a job, transportation etc.
8. Donations to DCCH and the Pro-Life agencies
9. Orphan Care Alliance in KY, <https://www.orphancarealliance.org/> as they support DCCH and the youth in KY's foster care system too, and offer a GATEWAY for linking needs and donations for youth in foster care.

PHASE FOUR: DIRECT ENGAGEMENT

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Fewer church members may be able to identify and help with this level of engagement. Often, training and background checks will be required. Ongoing, consistent interaction with the children and their families provide the greatest results. Having church staff and representatives trained with appropriate clearance will improve the engagement by other church members. Providing a foundation of faith and spirituality allows people to find fulfilment and support in challenging circumstances. Training and information on trauma-informed care is essential at this level of engagement.

Examples of Direct engagement:

1. Hosting celebrations, picnics, holiday gatherings, birthday parties, for a child in care from your church etc.
2. Academic tutoring for the child in care
3. Mentoring, volunteering directly with the youth in care
4. Respite care for the foster and adoptive parents
5. Offer special skill and professional services to the foster or adoptive families
6. Become a CASA worker, (Court Appointed Special Advocate) -
<https://casaforkidsnky.org/> or www.casanky.com, or
<https://www.kentuckycasanetwork.org/who-we-are/about-us.html>
7. Join the Foster Care Citizen's Review Board -
<https://kycourts.gov/courtprograms/cfcrb/pages/default.aspx>

PHASE FIVE: INTEGRATION

As families become aware of the needs and gifts within the children in foster care system, they will become more aware of their role in nurturing and supporting children. This integration will allow a deeper awareness of the Holy Spirit and ensure a growing network of care and support.

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A robust foster care support network can also spur deeper reflection on the criminal justice system, the educational improvement, and societal responses to end the root causes for children being removed from birth family and brought into foster care.

Suggested Prayers of the Faithful

For all children in foster care, who are waiting for adoptive parents or who are in danger because of their family's circumstances, that they may experience God's healing love through the care given to them by all involved in the child welfare system...we pray to the Lord

For those who work in child welfare – the judges, attorneys, guardians, social workers, support staff, therapists that they may shower God's goodness and love upon the children and their families with whom they come in contact...

For foster parents, who often stand in the gap for children who suffer emotional, physical and spiritual harm from their family's circumstances, that they may know their foster children are a gift from an eternal God, who deserve to be cared for as God's precious children...

For foster parents and those who work in the child welfare system, that they may be the hands, feet eyes, voice and heart of our loving God to children in foster care...

For our church, as we strive to be a witness of God's love in action, that we may embrace children in foster care, their families – biological, adoptive and foster; and the volunteers and professionals in this work, and that we may sincerely seek ways to minister in this often difficult, yet essential work...

For our church community, that we may be more courageous in making space for God in our lives, so we may be better guardians of the vulnerable, especially children and their families seeking our care...

For our parish community, that we may be more compassionate, so we may be present and faithful to all, but especially to children whose lives are chaotic, anxiety-filled, and too often marred by violence and drug addiction...

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For our government leaders, that lawmakers and agency directors may make wise decisions in the funding and operation of our state's child welfare system, so the children and families have the resources and services they need to flourish...

For young people who have or are about to age out of the foster care system, that they might find the mentors and supports needed to navigate a new wise lifestyle for themselves...

Holy Days and holidays

March 19, - *Feast Day of St. Joseph, patron of foster parents*

April – *National Child Abuse Prevention Month; Last Sunday in April, BLUE SUNDAY, (National Day of Prayer for victims of Child Abuse)*

May – *Month of Mary, Mother of God; National Foster Care Month; Mother's Day; National HELP (Honor, Encourage, Love and Pray) for Child welfare Professionals Week*

June - *Father's Day*

July 26 – *Feast of Saints Anne and Joachim, Jesus' grandparents*

October – *Respect Life Month*



November – *National Adoption Month*

December – *Feast of the Holy Family*

Scripture Resources and sermon/homily notes

Litany of St. Joseph

Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy,
God, the Father of Heaven, God the Son, Redeemer of the world, God the Holy Spirit, Holy Trinity,
One God

Holy Mary, Saint Joseph, Noble Offspring of David, Light of Patriarchs, Spouse of the Mother of God,
Chaste Guardian of the Virgin, Foster Father of the Son of God, Zealous Defender of Christ, Head of the
Holy Family,

Joseph Most Just, Joseph Most Chaste, Joseph Most Prudent, Joseph Most Courageous, Joseph Most
Obedient, Joseph Most Faithful,

Mirror of Patience, Lover of Poverty, Model of Workmen, Glory of Domestic Life, Guardian of Virgins,
Pillar of Families, Comfort of the Afflicted, Hope of the Sick, Patron of the Dying, Terror of Demons,
Protector of the Holy Church

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, SPARE US, O LORD

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, GRACIOUSLY HEAR US, O LORD

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, HAVE MERCY ON US

V. He has made him lord of his household.

R. And prince over all his possessions.

Let Us Pray, O God, who, in your loving providence, chose Blessed Joseph to be the spouse of the your
most Holy Mother, grant us the favor of having him for our intercessor in heaven whom on earth we
venerate as our protector: you, who live and reign forever and ever. AMEN.

Luke 2: 52 Jesus “*increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor of God and man*”. Under the paternal
care of St. Joseph, we too can find him as our “increaser” to grow closer in the presence of God.”

“*St. Joseph is our guide and our model. Because our vocation is like his. We must live his life, practice
his virtues, and assimilate his spirit*”. **St. Peter Julian Eymard**

“*Let us love Jesus above all, let us love Mary as our mother; but then, how could we keep from loving
Joseph, who was so intimately united to both Jesus and Mary? And how can we honor him better than by*

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imitating his virtues? Now, what else did he do in all his life but contemplate, study, and adore Jesus, even in the midst of his daily labors? Behold, therefore, our model.” St. Madeline Sophie Barat

Exodus 20:12 *“Honor your mother and father”*

“The position of St. Joseph as husband and foster father gives witness to the dignity of fatherhood.”
Venerable Joseph Mindszenty

“Although you (St. Joseph) are not necessary for the conception and birth, nevertheless you will be necessary for (his) sustenance; and your first care will concern his name.” St. Albert the Great

“Saint Joseph’s dignity springs from his privilege of being the legal father of the Incarnate Son of God. Here, then, is a man whom the Son of God calls father, one whom he (Jesus) serves and obeys and before whom he kneels for a paternal blessing.” St. Peter Julian Eymard

Scripture Resources and sermon/homily notes, cont.

Foster Father role is more than contractual, in Latin, the title literally means Nurturer of the Son of God. This spiritual fatherhood is forever as it shows the enduring loving relationship between the spiritual father and the child. St. Joseph’s role as foster father was more than just legal fatherhood, it was an authoritative, affectionate, faithful, and everlasting fatherhood.

Matthew 25: 35- 40

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

As a good nurturing foster father, St. Joseph did for the least of these and he did it actually for Jesus. What better model do we have to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for sick, visit the imprisoned and lonely?

Joseph was the savior of the Savior, as he protected Jesus from the evil wrath of Herod.

Matthew 1:20, *“Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit”*. Joseph knew Mary, and she was full of grace, he instinctively had to have felt Mary’s profound holiness. When she confided this

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overwhelming news with Joseph, and what this special calling meant for her, it was probably too much for Joseph to comprehend. It was not out of mistrust, but rather his own sheer sense of inadequacy to be her espoused. It took God's urging through an angel to quell his fear, to reassure him that he could fulfill his special role as the Spouse of the Mother of God, Most Chaste Guardian of the Virgin, Foster Father of the Son of God, Head of the Holy Family, and Zealous Defender of Christ, among many of St Joseph's titles.

Foster Family Survey

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

Do you have family in town or a small group who supports you? Yes or No

Names of children and youth under your care:

Special snacks, treats, activities your children enjoy:

Favorite types of food or meals?

Please describe a day of the week that is most challenging because of transportation, therapy, visits, heavier homework etc.



Please list you and (your spouse’s if applicable) favorite things on this list:

Restaurant (s)	How do you relax	Dessert	Coffee or tea
Favorite color	Sports/teams	Flower	Song/music genre

WHAT ROLE WILL YOU PLAY?

Five ways to help children through the St. Joseph Ministry

1. Foster Parenting

- Nearly 10,000 children are in out of home care
- Foster homes are most needed for children over 10, sibling groups, and minorities
- Foster parenting requires self-sacrifice, and the church wants to support you in this important role and unique calling.

2. Biological Family Support

- About three out of every four children will be reunited with birth parents or relatives.
- After ensuring for the safety, Kentucky’s top priority is to help birth parents heal and find the resources to regain custody of their children
- Biological families need more support to help them break the cycle of abuse, poverty, addiction, the church can offer support too.

3. Independent Living Youth

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- At age 18, youth living in foster care who are not able to reunite with birth family and not adopted, age out or are given the option to extend their state custody until age 21 and garner more IL supports
- Without strong network of support, these young people are vulnerable to being homeless, exploited, and having difficulties with legal and moral decision making
- Long-term relationships and guidance are required to offer them a future worthy of their human dignity

4. Adoption

-

5. It Takes A Church



HOW CHILDREN MOVE through the FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

Report of child abuse/neglect is made to the local CPS (Child Protection Service), workers with the KY CHFS/DCBS (Cabinet for Health Family Services, Department for Community Based Services).

CPS investigates allegations > Case closed, no substantiation of allegation

Case opened > Child placed into Out of Home Care - Relative, Fictive Kin or Foster Family

-Case opened but child remains in family, Treatment plan created, services offered, continued assessment and case worker supervision > case closed or child now brought into OHC and relative, fictive kin or foster parent sought

Once in OHC – case still monitored, birth parents offered services and treatment, visits with child > Child eventually reunites OR Parents Rights are terminated and child placed adoptively with relative, fictive kin, foster parent or new adoptive parent OR Child ages out and Independent Living Services are offered to youth at age 18-21.