

FOCUS offers guidance for Catholics when Your Friends or Family Leave the Church

[Rachel Quackenbush](#) on September 1, 2025

Summary of article: Full article below

Missionaries with the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) released guidelines for Catholics struggling with the pain of seeing friends or family leave the Church.

Their first piece of guidance is to begin with prayer, according to an [article](#) from FOCUS.

“No argument, no perfectly worded conversation, and no social media post can change hearts the way God’s grace can,” the article stated.

FOCUS encourages Catholics to **intercede through the Rosary, Eucharistic adoration, the Divine Mercy Chaplet, and sacrifices offered quietly for those who have left.**

They also stress the importance of **remaining close to loved ones rather than pulling away.**

“Keep calling, keep inviting, keep being a friend,” they said. “Let them know that your love for them isn’t dependent on whether they share your beliefs.”

According to FOCUS, the consistency of showing up is often remembered in difficult times.

Listening is another essential step. FOCUS notes that each person’s story is unique.

“Some leave because of a painful experience with a priest or parishioner. Others struggle with Church teachings,” the article said “Some drift away without even realizing it.”

The missionaries recommend **asking questions about what led to the decision and “really listen[ing] — not to argue, not to correct, but to understand.”**

Rather than relying on debates, FOCUS highlights the **power of joyful witness.**

“Instead of lecturing, **live a life that makes them wonder what they’re missing,**” they said. **“Let them see the peace you have in suffering, the joy you find in prayer, the love you have for the Eucharist.”**

Patience is another theme of their advice. They remind the faithful that St. Monica prayed for years before her son, St. Augustine, returned to the Church.

Simple gestures of welcome also matter even if the loved one declines them. Invitations to attend Mass, join a retreat, or read a book together can leave an impression.

“They might say no — but **they’ll remember that you cared enough to ask,**” the missionaries note.

FOCUS concluded with a reminder that the task is not to change others but to love them.

“Our job isn’t to ‘fix’ people — it’s to love them like Jesus does,” the missionaries said. “And trust that God is never done writing their story.”

Full article below

What to Do When Your Friends or Family Leave the Church

May 14, 2025

Wondering what to do when your family leaves the Church?

It's one of the hardest things to experience as a Catholic—watching someone you love walk away from the faith. Maybe it's a sibling who grew distant from the Church after high school, a close friend who started questioning Catholic teachings, or even a parent who slowly stopped practicing. You feel the ache in your heart, the worry for their soul, and the uncertainty of what to do next.

So how do you respond when someone you love leaves the Church? How do you hold onto hope without pushing them further away?

Here's the good news: God hasn't given up on them—and neither should you.

1. Pray

Before you say a single word to them, bring them to Jesus in prayer. No argument, no perfectly worded conversation, and no social media post can change hearts the way God's grace can.

- Pray the Rosary for them. Mary is the mother of all prodigal children.
- Offer sacrifices for them—fasting, small inconveniences, hidden acts of love.
- Go to Eucharistic Adoration and place them before Jesus.
- Pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet, entrusting them to God's infinite mercy.
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Prayer is the most important thing you can do.

2. Stay Close to Them

It's tempting to feel hurt, disappointed, or even betrayed when someone leaves the Church. But the last thing they need is for you to cut them off.

Instead of pulling away, be the one who keeps showing up. Keep calling, keep inviting, keep being a friend. Let them know

that your love for them isn't dependent on whether they share your beliefs.

Why? Because when life gets hard—and it will—they'll remember who stuck by them. And they'll know they can turn to you.

3. Listen Before You Speak

It's easy to assume we know why someone left the Church, but every story is different. Some leave because of a painful experience with a priest or parishioner. Others struggle with Church teachings. Some drift away without even realizing it.

Ask questions like:

- What led you to this decision?
- What's been your experience with the Church?
- What do you believe now?
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And then—really listen. Not to argue, not to correct, but to understand.

When people feel heard, they become more open. And when they become more open, God has room to work.

4. Share Your Faith with Joy

Nobody wants to be “won” in an argument. But everyone is drawn to authentic joy.

Instead of lecturing, live a life that makes them wonder what they're missing. Let them see the peace you have in suffering, the joy you find in prayer, the love you have for the Eucharist.

When they see the beauty of your faith—not just in words, but in action—they might start to wonder if they should take another look.

5. Trust in God's Timing

It's easy to panic and feel like you have to bring them back right now. But remember: **this isn't your battle alone.**

- St. Monica prayed for years before her son, St. Augustine, returned to the faith.
- God's mercy is bigger than their doubts, struggles, or mistakes.
- **He loves them even more than you do.**

Don't lose hope. Even if you don't see the fruits of your prayers right away, God is always working behind the scenes.

6. Keep Inviting

A simple invitation can go a long way.

- Invite them to Christmas or Easter Mass.
- Ask them to come with you to a Catholic conference (SEEK!), retreat, or talk.
- Suggest reading a book or watching a video together about faith.

They might say no—but they'll remember that you cared enough to ask.

7. Love Them No Matter What

At the end of the day, this step is integral to understanding what to do when your family leaves the Church.

Our job isn't to "fix" people—it's to love them like Jesus does.

And trust that God is never done writing their story.

It's hard when someone you love walks away from the Church. But don't lose heart. Keep praying, keep showing up, and keep trusting that God's grace is bigger than any obstacle.

And remember—their story isn't over yet.

Watch this video from Fr. Mike Schmitz on what to do when your family leaves the Church:

[When Someone You Love Walks Away From God / Leaves the Church](#)

Additional Resources

Parent with grown children considering leaving the Church? Check out [this post](#) from EWTN on how to use St. Monica as a guide through this difficult time. And [here's one](#) from Pints with Aquinas on this same topic.