

# GUIDELINES FOR FAITH FORMATION PROGRAMS

## The Vision of Catechesis and Evangelization

Our times are uncertain, but our mission is clear. As catechetical and youth ministers, our vocation is to share the Good News with others and to assist them in growing in their relationship with Jesus. This is the vision that guides our efforts to offer faith formation for all in our parishes this fall and beyond.

While we work within parameters established by health organizations, state and local governments and our diocesan leadership, we rejoice knowing that God is here, and His Spirit is assisting our efforts. Because of this Truth, we know that our good works will bear fruit and that with consistent and caring actions our parish families will find themselves enriched by their experiences. Imagine...this may be your favorite year in ministry yet!

Keeping in mind our vision to encounter Jesus, we look to develop new strategies for our current situation. This document offers recommendations and guidelines for meeting that vision specific to children, youth, and adult formation, with an enhanced effort to coaching and equipping parents.

## Primary Considerations

Out of our concern for one another, and so we can minister in the safest capacity available, the following key practices should be part of a parish's plan for on-site formation:

- All instructions located in the section "Guidelines for Non-Liturgical Gatherings and Meetings" should be followed for all Faith Formation gatherings. Additional considerations can be found in "Appendix XII: Gathering Youth and Children in Our Parishes during Phases Two and Three"
- Face coverings should be worn at all times indoors. Recommended for all, required for ages 10 and older.
- Individuals (or family groups) should be seated at least 6 feet apart.
- When hosting a non-liturgical gathering or meeting for children or youth under age 18, **temperature checks are required of all participants regardless of age**. This includes religious education classes, youth group sessions and family retreat days, for example.
- Maximum number of participants depends upon the space and distance requirements and current local government regulations.
- Hand sanitizer and/or access to soap and water should be readily available.

- If food is offered at any event, have pre-packaged boxes or bags for each attendee, instead of a buffet or family-style meal. Avoid serving food from common dishes.
- Allow time in between activities for proper cleaning and disinfection of all furniture and high touch surfaces.
- When speaking in front of a large group inside (i.e., to give directions, to lead a prayer, to give a talk), the leader of the group can remove their mask as long as they are at a distance greater than 6 feet from the rest of the group. Once they have communicated their message, they should put the mask back on. When in small group settings, everyone should keep their masks on, including the leader.
- Consistent grouping of people is encouraged to minimize the virus spread in the community.
- Encourage everyone to use the restroom prior to arriving on campus to minimize use and potential crowding.
- Attendance of participants should be recorded.

Each parish in our diocese is unique and the ability, and best intention, for offering in-person religious education and youth ministry will vary. Parishes are encouraged to communicate with parents prior to making plans to determine their willingness to bring their children in-person, as well as reaching out to catechists to determine their willingness to minister in person or virtually.

It is also wise to consider the decision of local schools (public and private) when designing parish plans. Parishes are allowed and strongly encouraged to offer both in-person and virtual options rather than offering only one option; this way, all families have an opportunity to engage in faith formation this year.