



## DIOCESE OF TRENTON

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May 19, 2020

Dear Pastors and Parish Catechetical Leaders,

I am so grateful for everything you are doing in your parish to engage families during the pandemic and the diocesan staff will continue to offer support to you. After much consideration, it has been decided that **in-person Summer Religious Education Programs and Vacation Bible Schools will NOT be permitted to take place in parishes in the Diocese of Trenton this summer.**

The reasons for this decision are the following:

- There is no indication at this time when Governor Murphy will allow in person contact, or what the reduced capacity will be;
- Meeting CDC screening guidelines, health and safety procedures, and monitoring requirements will be onerous on the parish;
- There are serious liability questions yet to be resolved.

A new tool released by the [CDC to provide guidance on youth programs and camps during the COVID-19 pandemic](#) and [“The Road Back: Restoring Economic Health through Public Health”](#) were especially helpful in trying to understand all that would need to be in place to safely reopen summer programs. Many of these same considerations will apply to programs going forward until there is a vaccine. It takes time to put these procedures in place and to train staff adequately in new ways of doing things.

Parishes may adapt their Summer Religious Education Programs for a virtual/on-line participation of students and families or come up with alternate models of Religious Education. The opportunity in the Summer Programs has always been to engage families throughout the year. This connection is key to coaching parents in their role as primary educators of their children for the faith. Let us look at this time as an opportunity to reevaluate our programs and find ways to accompany families. I am available to assist any parish with adapting their Summer Religious Education Program or coming up with an alternate model of Religious Education.

Let's continue to pray for an end to the virus, for those who are infected and for those who care for the sick. May God continue to bless us and keep us close to Him.

In Christ,

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