

# Shrine of the Sacred Heart

3211 Sacred Heart Way, NW ♦ Washington, DC 20110 ♦ TEL. 202-234-8000

Sunday, October 11, 2020

Dear Parents and Members of the Families of our children and youth who participate in our Parish Catechetical programs:

Peace and good.

Since the opening of the Church in June, with the wonderful dedication of the catechists and the participation of many families, we have been able to celebrate the sacraments of **Baptism, First Confession, First Communion and Confirmation**. Thank you to all.

The pandemic has changed many of our routines. During this time, I have noticed the deep commitment that many families have with God and the affection that they show towards their children in forming them in the Catholic faith in healthy and holy ways. I have been impressed when seeing the sacrifices so many are making for the good of their children.

As we begin this catechetical year, I want to express my desire that you find in the catechists and in our community of the Sacred Heart an environment that facilitates the religious instruction of your children. This year, especially because of so much suffering, we want to strive that our programs become even more “**LOVING AND KIND,**” that is, that we may work closer with the families and so be able to serve and offer better resources, contributing to the Christian formation of their children. Therefore, we want to emphasize three elements:

- I.** Offer a listening environment, trying to accommodate the needs of each family, that is, not to make their lives more complicated.
- II.** Provide a healthy environment that strictly follows all the norms of the government and the archdiocese and contributes to the peace of the families.
- III.** Offer a holy and sound environment, so that the children know God.

**I.** To facilitate listening, Sacred Heart parish staff and volunteer catechists will work to accompany and assist parents in their role as primary catechists of their children. We will support parents and guardians in choosing the way in which catechesis can be imparted to their children, trying to satisfy their requests.

The following options are proposed to help catechists accompany parents in the development of faith formation for their children. By offering separate small group catechesis in a variety of settings, we hope to decrease the possibility of contamination by not exposing a child to ALL other children and catechists in the program on a regular basis.

**A. IN-PERSON CATECHESIS:** When the traditional in-person classroom catechesis is followed, all of the guidelines for in-person school education must be applied to the catechetical environment.

1. In-person, in one of the parish facilities.
2. In-person, outdoor gathering in a private yard and home of a catechist or member of the Church. The parents must be present.
3. In-person, outdoor gathering in a public area. The parents must be present.
4. In-person, home learning in the home of the child under the guidance of a parent and/or family member. The catechist may direct but is not present.

**B. VIRTUAL CATECHESIS**

1. Zoom Meetings The Archdiocese has published a 10-point document entitled “Child Protection Expectations for Online Gathering.” Note that the parent or guardian must sign a “Permission and Release/Waiver Form” and that two (2) VIRTUS certified catechist must be on the call from the beginning until the end. following ADW document for “Online gathering.”
2. Via Computer through recordings: The primary catechist or other visiting professional catechists may share pre-recorded catechetical instructions.
3. Via Computer: by sharing religious movies and other religious and cultural programs.
4. In-person, home learning in the home of the child under the guidance of a parent and/or family member. The catechist may direct but is not present.

**C. HOME LEARNING** in the home of the child under the guidance of a parent and/or family member. The catechist may direct but is not present.

For parents who wish to conduct catechesis in the home, please visit our Parish website: <https://sacredheartdc.org> to see the entire Loyola Press Catechetical series with user and printer friendly versions.

**D. HYBRID MODEL:** The hybrid model will offer the child some degree of “in person human interaction” using a combination of the methods explained above.

**II.** To provide a healthy environment, we will follow all of the government and archdiocesan guidelines to contribute to the peace of the families. Some measures include:

A. **Take the temperature** of each catechist and child with an "infrared thermometer" as they do in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. The CDC says that if the temperature is higher than 100.4 degrees, the person should not participate in activities. Like the Basilica, our norm at Sacred Heart will be that participants must have a temperature that is not higher than 100.1 degrees.

B. All participants are **obliged to disinfect their hands** before entering. Each may bring their own disinfectant, but the Parish will provide disinfectant on a table at the front door.

C. All participants are obliged to **keep their mask on** during the entire time of the catechesis.

D. At this time, **no snacks or meals** should be shared.

E. The **6-foot social distance** must be respected. Therefore, each classroom or catechetical class should be dismissed separately, avoiding crowds or groups of people in the hallways or at the entrance of the building.

**THOSE WHO HAVE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19 SHOULD NOT ATTEND CHURCH OR CATECHISM.** The CDC website identifies symptoms of COVID-19. They can appear 2 to 14 days after being exposed and may include the following:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath, trouble breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Stuffy or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

**III.** We would like to offer a holy and sound environment, so that your children may know God. Under the circumstances, **flexibility** and **concern for your children are crucial**. We want to support all of our families so that your children receive proper catechesis and prepare for the sacraments. Our priests, religious, consecrated laity and catechists are excellent and ready to serve. Regarding catechetical instruction, do not become excessively worried if your child is unable to attend class because of sickness. We will work with you and your child so as to complete the religious instruction.

In addition to the Parish Ministry Reopening Plan and Guidelines, the Archdiocese of Washington has presented the following policies for parish catechetical ministry.

- Parishes are to provide 30 contact hours of religious education formation. The 30-hour requirement does not all have to be done within the traditional class setting, nor be led by a parish catechist. Parishes should establish accountability protocols to track participation.
- Each parish must complete the Annual Safe Environment Training and Reporting for all students - regardless of whether the program is an in-person, virtual or blended formation model.
- The Faith Knowledge Assessment will be implemented for all students in the spring of 2021.

Noting that many parishioners have returned and that we are working to comply with all the norms of the government and the archdiocese, rather than offer one catechetical session in English and three in Spanish, we will be offering 5 sessions in Spanish on Sunday and several more session on Wednesday and Saturday in Spanish, so as to create smaller groups. The Sunday schedule:

8:00 am - 9:15 am

9:30 am - 10:45 am

11:00 am - 12:15 pm

2:00 pm - 3:15 pm

4:30 pm - 5:45 pm

The different schedules are proposed to facilitate the possibility that the same catechists can offer catechesis, IN-PERSON, in 2 shorter sessions, where 6-8 or 10 children participate in each session. This means that the catechist may have between 12-16 or 20 students total. Also, due to covid-19, classes should not be very long. Classes will be 1 hour and 15 minutes each.

Remember that some sessions should be done FROM HOME, to invite students and their families to take more responsibility for their Christian formation.

This year presents a unique opportunity for us to emphasize the presence of Christ in the domestic Church. Incorporating more intentional support for parents will ensure that our good works will bear fruit for our students, families and parish community.

Blessings,

Fr. Emilio Biosca Agüero OFM Cap.  
Pastor