



Operational Guidelines for Faith formation Programs For Catechetical Administrators

Preventative Hygiene

In accord with the directives of the Centers for Disease Control, we remind our leaders, volunteers, children and youth, to observe the following preventative hygiene measures. Any specific health concerns should be directed to family physicians.

- Thoroughly wash hands as often as possible.
- Cough/sneeze in the elbow and not the hand.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Stay at home / keep children at home when sick, for a minimum of 72 hours after fever and other symptoms subside.
- Prepare a space in your building that is removed from others for those who are sick but cannot leave the premises immediately. Clean and disinfect location after use.
- Students or children who have had *actual* or *potential* exposure to COVID-19—follow all health regulations including reporting illness and restricting social contamination, and when required self-quarantine for 14 days. Consult parish administration before returning to faith formation or youth ministry.
- Following the lead of the CDC, classrooms and those objects that are frequently touched should be cleaned and disinfected often. *Please make arrangements with your pastor to ensure that facilities are cleaned especially following programming.*

Liturgy and Faith Formation Issues

- **Priority of the sacraments:** The Eucharist, especially on Sunday, and the sacraments will always be at the heart of our belief and the faithful need to have access to them to the greatest extent possible. First Communion and Confirmation are therefore to continue as planned until further notified by the diocese.
- **Priority of student formation:** Educating children is essential. We will continue, to the extent possible, to keep our schools, faith formation/youth ministry programs open but will close programs should it become necessary. Those families who are not comfortable sending their children to faith formation are welcome to homeschool. Parishes are to provide needed materials in support of those families wishing to do so.
- **Eucharistic reception:** Reception of the Eucharist by cup has been suspended at Mass until further notice. This includes reception of the cup at First Communion. For the sake of teaching children how to receive from the cup, catechists may use disposable cups, one per child, but there will be no cup given at an actual Mass until the suspension is lifted.

- **Sign of peace:** Expressions by physical touch at the sign of peace have been suspended at Mass until further notice. You may wish to practice with children how they can extend peace to one another (a wave, nod of the head, or bow), in accord with your pastor/administrator's wishes.
- **Large gatherings:** Nonessential diocesan-level large gatherings are cancelled starting on Monday, March 16, 2020. Parishes, schools and Catholic organizations are encouraged to assess the need for large gatherings as well. Sometimes parishes offer programs that are non-essential to their faith formation such as movies, speakers, service activities, etc. that are large in scope. It is highly recommended that these events be suspended until further notice as well.

Preparation in the Event of Closures

The diocese is following state and local health directives, as well as the actions of our public schools, regarding student programming. In general, should a school district close for health reasons, parishes located in that district should also close faith formation programs. The Bishop retains the final say in all matters catechetical and sacramental. Catechetical Administrators should consider the following now:

- **Home lessons:** Materials for parents to complete coursework at home – with special attention to any remaining lessons for sacramental prep, as these lessons cannot be omitted.
- **Internet options for classes:** It may be possible to provide webinars through google, facetime, skype or other alternatives for classes. This may be a welcome option for parents who do not feel equipped to catechize unassisted. Cisco is making webex available for free to students and teachers, though it is not clear whether this service is available for religious purposes. To learn more about Cisco's webex offer, see: <https://www.freetech4teachers.com/2020/03/cisco-makes-webex-free-and-publishes.html>
- **Communication plan:** update family and staff contact information, identify communication platforms (hotline, automatic text messaging, website, radio, tv...), including provision for persons with language and disability barriers.
- **Plan for staff and volunteer absences:** strengthen substitute base, think through group lessons, activities, etc. that can be used onsite should classrooms need to be combined.
- **Chain of command:** establish leadership options for program in the event of absence of staff members
- **Work at home:** with the staff of your parish, think through how you could continue to provide support to your families from home should the situation arise.