

Interim Plan for Delivery of St. Mary Religious Education Program thru February 7, 2021 – approved by Father Woods (01/08/2021)

In August, Maryland public schools decided to teach our children using online instructions. We, at St. Mary Catholic Church, Newport, Religious Education Program, wanted to provide an in classroom instruction program for our children. This decision was made as informed by CDC and ADW guidelines, to provide a safe educational and live interaction CCD program between the students and teachers to learn the Catholic faith.

Since August, we worked hard to ensure that all CDC safety precautions were adhered to – wearing masks at all times, 6 feet social distancing in desk placement, cleaning classrooms after each class, praying the Rosary in the classroom (instead of our longtime practice of gathering all students and teachers together in the hallway), and staggered release of individual classes. While we were successful ensuring that our students and teachers were safe in the CCD classroom setting, COVID-19 cases continued to rise in our state and more individuals were exposed in our community.

On December 13 and 20, 2020, the St. Mary Catholic Church, Newport, Religious Education Program received approval from Father Woods to cancel classes due to notifications that some of our parishioner families and students had been either diagnosed positive or had been exposed to a positive individual. Since this pause in our CCD program, the number and spread of COVID cases and hospitalizations has only increased, and it is unclear when they will subside.

As a result of these events and over the last couple of weeks, the St. Mary Religious Education Program and Father Woods regrouped to develop an interim path on how to continue to deliver a religious education program ensuring that our students receive their instructions within a safe environment. Specifically, we wanted to ensure that our students receiving their Sacraments during this CCD school year (2nd and 8th Grade students) are fully prepared and have met all requirements.

As noted on the St. Mary Catholic Church, Newport Religious Education mission statement located on our website, CCD parents are encouraged to ‘walk closely with their children as they grow in knowledge and practice of the Catholic faith’. With COVID-19, we are now faced with the time for all CCD parents to partnership directly with CCD teachers to deliver a solid Catholic religious education for our children.

There will be no CCD classes on January 10, 2021. Beginning January 17- February 7, 2021, we are calling for CCD parents to deliver Religious Instruction working with their children, with the remote support of their CCD teacher, to review their ‘We Believe’ books and completing the Chapter/Unit and Assessments/Tests. Once these tests are completed, parents will send certification of completion of these tests to their CCD teachers via email. This can be conducted by scanning and forwarding a copy of the completed tests by their student(s) in an email, or taking a picture on one’s smartphone, and texting or emailing it to the teacher. If scanning or a photo of the student’s tests can’t be conducted, an email from the parent to the CCD teacher certifying that the student completed the test/assessment is sent to your CCD Teacher and St. Mary Catholic Church, Newport email address (stmarycatholicchurchnewport@gmail.com).

For the 8th Grade Class, it is anticipated that classes will be conducted via Zoom meetings on Sundays with the students to ensure that 8th Grade students are fully prepared to receive their Confirmation Sacrament in May 2021. Mr. McIntyre will be in contact with the CCD 8th Grade families for further information regarding these Sunday sessions.

In addition to reviewing the Chapters and conducting the tests in the 'We Believe' book with your child, certification of saying the Rosary and attending/watching Mass (virtually or in person at St. Mary Catholic Church, Newport) with your child is a requirement. Attached to this letter, are resources of videos for saying the Rosary and recorded Sunday Masses at St. Peter's Catholic Church Waldorf if you are unable to attend Sunday Mass. Reviewing these videos (or any other Sunday Mass), fulfills the requirements of saying the Rosary and attending Sunday Mass with your CCD student.

Your CCD teacher, will reach out to you directly to let you know which Chapter in the 'We Believe' book to get started and completed over the next five weeks, will provide guidance regarding what to emphasize, and answer your questions. CCD teachers, in turn, will let the Religious Education Staff, know the progress of all students in order to be reported to Father Woods on the status of assessment/tests, praying the Rosary and attending Masses.

These upcoming weeks will be challenging, but faith in God and Jesus Christ will get us through this. Our children, as next generation Catholics, depend on our dedication and partnership to provide a solid platform for their religious education. We appreciate your time and commitment to your child's Catholic faith and growth through this at-home CCD period of time. We also appreciate your patience with working through these difficulties with the COVID virus and our intention to ensure safety to students, households, and teachers. Thank you, and God Bless you.