



# THE DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO

215 N. WESTNEDGE AVE.  
KALAMAZOO, MI 49007-3760  
(269) 349-8714 FAX (269) 349-6440

Dear Clergy and Parish Catechetical Leaders,

We are in a very tumultuous yet exciting time. The worldwide pandemic has wreaked havoc on the "normal" ways of doing things. We have less people worshipping at Mass weekly, our educational processes have been limited, and gatherings are nearly impossible. Yet, in the midst of this I know we all are willing and able to rise to the occasion. The mission of Jesus Christ is not stopped by a disease, and the gates of hell will not prevail. I have heard many unique and courageous ways that many of you have continued the mission of evangelization and ministry during these times.

Here at the Diocese of Kalamazoo I want to reassure you we have been working behind the scenes, and often around the clock to continue to be able to assist you in your ministry. One of the ways we have done this is by creating an entire religious education program that can easily be implemented at your parish if you so choose. We listened to you as parish leaders, to parents, and to youth as we tried to figure out what the needs of such a program would be. While it would have been easier to find a program to recommend, we did not feel any program out there was going to meet the needs we heard.

Here are some of the things we wanted to address in this program:

1. Ease of use for parents.
2. Not overwhelming (many parents are overwhelmed by receiving a text book and asked to present to their children).
3. Encouraging faith relationship in the home.
4. Easy for parishes to implement.
5. Connection to the parish.
6. Flexibility.
7. Not time consuming.

So, we present to you "The Way". This is named after the early Church where it was said that the Christians were followers of the Way. The idea is that we assist families in being followers of the way. Here are some of the elements of the program.

**Prayer:** Each week families are invited to pray over the Gospel for the next week, they will also learn about a saint each week, and be invited to pray a devotional each week.

**Live:** Each week there are four different suggestions on how the family can live out some of the works of mercy.

**Learn:** For your schedule RE year there are 25 topics that you can schedule for your families. These topics will give the parents a solid 10-minute video on the topic giving a succinct condensed understanding of the topic. Then, there is a sample script for each family to use for grades 1-8. Finally, there are questions and activities for each of those grade levels. These could be returned to the parish to monitor the progress of the program.

This is designed to be an at-home program, but could easily be adapted to an in-person setting. You could have catechists take the role of the parent for an in-person program or you can even bring the parents together to watch the videos and then give them some time to discuss how best to teach their own children. Throughout the 25 topics, every theology standard we have for parish religious education is completed. This is simultaneous being developed in Spanish, not just a translation but written based on the same topics but in the Spanish language.

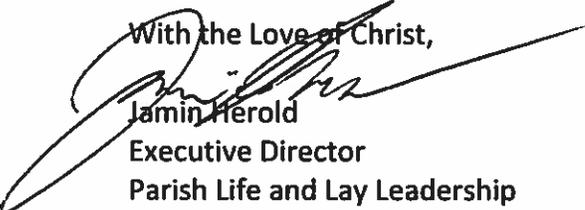
As an at home program, I would suggest you still have catechists. However, I would move them more to a mentor roll. They could contact their assigned families monthly to monitor progress, assist with any additional questions and they could receive the answers to the questions and activities. We will have all scripts, questions, and activities available in a PDF form. The only item that would need to be done online at this point, are the videos (one per week). If you are in an area where many parishioners have NO access to internet, please call to discuss options for the videos.

This program is completely free for any parish in the Diocese of Kalamazoo, and may be used by as many families as you would like. This could be a great way to address those families that may feel uncomfortable sending their students in-person, it could be used in-person and then transitioned to at-home if the state moves backwards, or it could just be implemented as the program for all families to use at home.

This program should be done by September 1. After it is completed, we will be working on sacramental preparation classes that follow the same methodology. We will also be finalizing a High School program that is more discussion based. We will also be adapting this program for Adult Education including the ability to use it for the catechetical portion of RCIA. Finally, while many topics such as anti-racism, theology of the body, discernment, etc., are woven throughout the current topics, we will be working on having additional topics that can be added to (not replacing) the 25 core topics.

It is my hope that you will find this program useful as you plan for what the 2020-2021 religious education year looks like. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. You may check out a sample week at [www.diokzoo.org/sample](http://www.diokzoo.org/sample)

With the Love of Christ,



Jamin Herold

Executive Director

Parish Life and Lay Leadership

Diocese of Kalamazoo

[jherold@diokzoo.org](mailto:jherold@diokzoo.org)

269-903-0183

## Ideas for using "The Way"

### In-Person 1 (traditional catechist-student model)

**LEARN:** Students gather together and are taught by a Catechist who has prepared by watching the video, reading through the script and going over the activities. The Catechists teaches the class using their own method and words, discusses using the questions provided or their own, and assists the kids with an activity or send an activity home to be returned.

**PRAY/LIVE:** Families still do the Pray/Live for the week at home, and return a form that explains how they prayed/lived during the week.

### In-Person 2 (adult catechesis model)

Parents gather in groups and watch the video or listen to a catechist teach from the material. One of the scripts may be modeled. Parents are given time in groups to review the scripts, questions and activities and discuss how they will teach the subject to their students and garner confidence and ideas from each other. Parents will then go home and teach their children.

**ALTERNATIVELY:** students may be around, and parents are given time after they are taught the material to teach their student on campus where they can get assistance if needed.

**PRAY/LIVE:** Families still do the Pray/Live for the week at home and return a form that explains how they prayed/lived during the week.

### At-Home 1 (With Catechist)

**LEARN/PRAY/LIVE** Parish Catechetical Leader creates a schedule for when each topic will be taught at home. Each family decides how to manage the time that week to learn the lesson, teach it and do the pray and live sections. A form is filled out to show how the material was completed, and giving answers to the questions and comments about the activities. These are emailed to the catechist that acts as a mentor. If they are struggling or have a question, the catechist becomes a resource and can be contacted. Monthly, the catechist will contact the families to check in on how they are doing and what assistance they might need.

### At-Home 2 (Without Catechist)

**LEARN/PRAY/LIVE** Parish Catechetical Leader creates a schedule for when each topic will be taught at home. Each family decides how to manage the time each week to learn the lesson, teach it, and do the pray and live sections. A form is filled out to show how the material was completed, and giving answers to the questions and comments about the activities. Forms are turned in weekly to the parish, and the parish will have someone check in with families that appear to fall behind.

There are many other good ways to use this program. Be creative, and do what you can to help build the families in faith, in Southwest Michigan.

You can create a response form for parents to use. Here is a simple sample.

## Sample Parental Response

1. We read the Gospel on this day as a family:

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2. We prayed the devotional in this way this week:

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3. One thing we thought was interesting about the saint for this week, was:

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4. We chose to do this "Live" activity this week:

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5. The following are some of the answers my student(s) had:

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6. Share something from the activities your student(s) did:

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Return weekly to: