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## *Parish Faith Formation Guidelines*

### Office of Catechesis

#### The State of Michigan Plan

##### *Phase 3* (According to the [State of Michigan Safe Start Plan](#))

If a parish is located in a Phase 3 MERC District, as described in the MI Safe Start Plan, the parish does not have the option of holding in-person faith formation. You are encouraged to provide support to your families to encounter the Lord God in their homes and to engage in faith formation as a family, including sacramental preparation.

##### *Phase 4* (According to the [State of Michigan Safe Start Plan](#))

If a parish is located in a Phase 4 MERC District, as described in the MI Safe Start Plan, the parish has the option of holding in-person faith formation. First, you will find a list of considerations which may help you in your planning. Following that are guidelines which must be adhered to if in-person gatherings occur on your campus.

#### Our Current Situation

As of today, August 5, 2020, all ten counties of the Diocese of Lansing are in Phase 4 of the MI State Safe Start Plan. In this phase it is permissible to have in-person gatherings at the local parish. The state has provided comprehensive safety guidelines for various situations. **We will adhere to the part of the plan which pertains to schools, the [MI Safe Schools plan](#).** Below, you will find lists of required actions, taken from the state plan, that must be adhered to if in-person gatherings are to be held in a parish building, including those for faith formation. These guidelines were taken from the same plan used by the Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Lansing. For parishes with a school it is important to establish practices and procedures which will be consistent for both the school and RE programming. In these cases, you may defer to details related in the plan for school. It is necessary to work with the School personnel to understand their more detailed plans in order to operate Religious Education events in a consistent manner.

Each DRE should assess their parish community for willingness to attend faith formation gatherings. Since Catechesis is, at its heart, a communion with the person of Jesus Christ, it is most effective when done in-person. Therefore, if possible, it would be beneficial to offer faith formation at the parish. This will require assessment of many factors. Are parishioners willing to attend? Is the DRE comfortable meeting in-person? Are Catechists willing to participate? Will it be



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possible to operate under the proper safety recommendations? Will you have enough personnel to perform the requirements for hygiene without overworking yourself? Do you have a janitorial staff who can cooperate with you to accomplish the cleaning requirements?

Given these variables it will be necessary for parishes to offer faith formation remotely for some or all of their community. **Parish's will need to provide to encouragement, coaching, and guidance from trained RE personnel and/or digital resources.** To this end, the Office of Catechesis will provide a list of suitable online resources including videos that demonstrate certain methods and techniques for parents. Those will be found here... <https://www.dioceseoflansing.org/education-catechesis-and-youth-ministry/being-church-home>

### Goals & Guiding Principles

No matter the restrictions we face, we **are called to provide faith formation and support to our families and individuals** to live out their faith. This provides an opportunity to focus on the formation of the Domestic Church, the family. I want to encourage you to see this as an opportunity to alter -- in some ways, and where appropriate -- the methods and content you employ to support the families of your community.

Don't be afraid to simplify the content. Most Parents aren't really prepared to do formalized catechesis with their children. They don't have proper training for using a lesson plan successfully nor are they properly catechized in the faith themselves. Providing a complicated lesson plan, in these situations, does not help them, it only complicates the matter. Instead we will provide a simplified plan and content which we hope will foster faith in Christ through conversion of heart and mind. Bishop Boyea will be calling for a year of Scripture this coming Advent. This provides the perfect opportunity to focus more directly on the person of Christ and his saving message as communicated in the Scriptures.

**Our goal for this coming year will be to help families achieve the following practices each week:**

1. **Join together in prayer**
2. **Read the Scriptures and other Spiritual works**
3. **Discuss as a family what they have read**

In these activities families will find the essence of our faith, Jesus Christ, in a simple format that they can manage. The office of Catechesis will provide recommended resources and guides to accomplish this work. Some resources will be from third party groups and some will be produced by local Catechists in the DOL. Check the "Church at Home" page on the DOL website for updated information.



**NOTE:** The United States Association for the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd have provided very good guidelines for how parishes might implement some form of faith formation using the methods and principles of CGS. These guidelines are in accord with these Diocese of Lansing guidelines and so any parish with an Atrium may use the suggestions found therein.

### **Religious Education Policies:**

In order to accomplish this the following policies regarding religious education will be suspended for the fiscal year 2020-2021.

- The policy recommending 30 hour minimum of classroom time for religious education programs will be temporarily suspended for the fiscal year 2020-2021.
- The requirement to use textbooks from the USCCB's conformity to the Catechism list will be suspended for the fiscal year 2020-2021. While many publishers are providing digital versions, which may mimic their textbooks, they may prove to be too cumbersome for families to manage on their own. Alternative sources, approved by the Office of Catechesis, may be used. See list below.
- RE Curriculum – DRE's will not be required to fulfill the requirements of the RE curriculum this fiscal year 2020-2021.

### **Things to Consider:**

#### **For In-person meetings:**

- Consider starting later than usual to allow yourself more time to coordinate your efforts.
- Stagger the offerings of RE in order to minimize the number of people in the building at one time, particularly at the beginning and end of RE times.
- Consider using multiple entrances/exits for pick-up and drop-off.
- Employ small group strategies.
  - These make it easier to accomplish social distancing.
  - Small group gatherings encourage discussion among participants which fosters relationships where faith can be developed.



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### For at-home Faith Formation

- Encourage parents to be co-disciples and co-learners with their children. Parents do not need to be ‘experts’ in order to lead a discussion on the proposed reading.
- Parents fulfill their role as primary educators of their children by seeking the presence of the Lord together with their children. This is done most essentially through the Scriptures, the Liturgy (Mass and sacraments), prayer, and discussion about the faith.
- Whatever content and activities you provide try to promote these four things: (look at our website for videos about these).
  - Listening to God
  - Wondering about God
  - Seeing God
  - Responding to God
- Assess the faith of your families. For those who have a well-grounded faith and are able to devote time to formalized lessons provide resources for deep learning.
- For families that do not already have a well-grounded faith, provide simple spiritual activities to use at home together with all members of the family. Long and complicated lesson plans will likely be too cumbersome for these parents to complete with their children.
- The Office of Catechesis will provide short videos meeting this need.
- Ask your Catechists to help you mentor families one-on-one, or in small groups, to support them in their efforts.
- Organize families into small cohorts led by a catechist. Arrange monthly or bi-monthly online (or in-person) meetings with the parents of these families to support them in their efforts.
- Emphasis should be placed on a discussion among all participants. These should be fostered by questions about the readings from Scripture or other resource.

### Sacramental Preparation

We are particularly **obligated to provide sacramental preparation** for those who express the desire to be united with God in the Sacraments. Parishes will need to discern ways to accompany families in preparing their children to receive the sacraments. Unless public liturgies are suspended by Bishop Boyea, we cannot withhold the sacraments from those who wish to participate in them. Those who desire to commune with Jesus Christ should be given the opportunity to do so. Canon Law specifies that families are capable of fostering this desire and forming their child’s disposition



to receive the sacrament in a worthy manner. Most families will, however, need encouragement and assistance to accomplish this.

Emphasis should be placed on the desire of the child to commune with Jesus Christ in the sacraments. The parent's goal is to foster that desire and to form the disposition of the child toward the sacrament. The best thing a parish can do is to help the parent and child encounter Jesus together so they have the opportunity to respond to him as a gift from God, the Father. Immediate preparation for each particular sacrament can be accomplished via small groups, one-on-one meetings, where safety concerns can be addressed by proper procedures.

**Separate documents will be provided jointly by the Office of Catechesis and the Office of High School and Middle School Ministry that will lay out essentials for each sacrament.**

### **Digital Resources:**

The Office of Catechesis will provide a list of suitable online resources including videos that demonstrate certain methods and techniques for parents. Those will be found here... <https://www.dioceseoflansing.org/education-catechesis-and-youth-ministry/being-church-home>

## **Required Guidelines for In-Person Faith Formation:**

### **Personal Protective Equipment**

- All staff will wear facial coverings when in classrooms, unless face coverings cannot be medically tolerated.
- All students in preschool and grades kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade will not be required to wear facial coverings in their classrooms, unless (1) students do not remain with their class throughout the session and (2) come into close contact with students in another class.
- All staff and students in grades 6-12 will wear facial coverings, unless face coverings cannot be medically tolerated as indicated by the parent/guardian.
- Provided that all DOL Mass guidelines are followed, masses are allowed.
- Facial coverings may be homemade or disposable, level one/basic-grade surgical masks.
- Face-shields are **not** an acceptable form of face covering.



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- For occasions where a speaker is presenting to a group of people, a face mask does not need to be worn by the presenter, so long as they remain six feet from members of the audience.

### Hygiene

- Provide adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors (including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol for safe use by staff and students, paper towels, tissues, and signs reinforcing proper handwashing techniques).
- Teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and/or the safe use of hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Educate staff and students on how to cough and sneeze into their elbows, or to cover with a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately using proper hand hygiene techniques.
- Systematically and frequently check and refill soap and hand sanitizers.
- Encourage the use of personal supplies such as writing utensils and papers to eliminate the sharing of supplies.
- Families are to inform you of any positive cases of COVID-19 of Religious Education participants.

### Spacing, Movement, and Access

- **Social distancing is required with all gatherings. Students should be spaced as far apart as possible in classrooms, whether desks or tables are utilized. They may be as close as 4 feet apart if everyone is wearing a mask. If there are students who cannot wear a mask then students should be at least 6 feet apart.**
- Class sizes are limited to space available to meet the distance requirements. We are not bound by any particular number of participants.
- Post signage to indicate proper social distancing.
- A drop off and pick up procedure must be established that keeps all families 6 feet apart.
- Place markers at six-foot intervals where line formation is anticipated.
- Provide social distancing markers in waiting and reception areas.
- Post signs on the doors of restrooms to indicate proper social distancing and hand hygiene techniques.



- Work with your parents to limit traffic in the parish/school building during RE to that which is absolutely necessary as determined by parish officials. All non-staff adults entering the building must wear a facial covering.

### Screening Students and Staff

- Families are encouraged to check their child's temperature at home using oral, tympanic, or temporal scanners; students with a temperature of 100.4 or greater should stay home and consider coronavirus testing if symptoms of COVID-19 are present.
- Families are encouraged to monitor their children for symptoms of COVID-19. The presence of any symptoms, including cough or shortness of breath, should prompt the family to keep the student home from school and to follow up with a primary care provider.
- Identify and designate a quarantine area and a staff person to care for students and staff who develop signs or symptoms of COVID-19 at the parish.
- RE workers will conduct daily self-examinations, including a temperature check, prior to coming to work. If they exhibit any new or unusual symptoms associated with COVID-19 they will stay home and contact their DRE.

### Cleaning

- Work with your janitorial staff who are the experts in your building in this area.
- Student desks and chairs along with frequently touched surfaces including light switches, doors, benches, bathrooms, will undergo cleaning after each faith formation session with either an EPA-approved disinfectant or diluted bleach solution.
- Supplies used during class will undergo cleaning after every class period or when cohorts change classrooms, with either an EPA-approved disinfectant or diluted bleach solution.
- Playground structures will continue to undergo normal routine cleaning, but using an EPA approved disinfectant is unnecessary.
- Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfection products, including storing products securely away from children, and with adequate ventilation when staff use products.
- It is recommended that Staff wear gloves and an appropriate mask when performing all disinfecting activities.