



ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK
YOUTH FAITH FORMATION
Catechetical

To: Directors and Coordinators of Religious Education
From: Sr. Joan Curtin, CND, Director of Archdiocesan Catechetical Office
Re: Parish Religious Education for Children/Youth in Grades 1 to 8
Date: June 2020 for September 2020 through May 2021

Attachments:

Parish Agreement/Application for Participation in the Family-Based Parish Religious Education Approach Meeting Outline for Use of Director/Coordinator in Presenting Parish Family-Based Approach Safe Environment Regulations for use of Online Platforms

While you are working on your plans for the opening of parish religious education in September, we in the Catechetical Office are working on resources that can assist you. All of us are beginning to get a clearer understanding of the challenges that will face both schools and our own parish religious education programs. In various ways, we have already begun meeting these challenges – you at the parish level and we at the archdiocesan level. This letter will alert you to guidelines and resources that are basically “in place” but at the same time are being further developed and shaped to serve the needs of your parish religious education programs during this unprecedented time.

Program Structure

The religious education models introduced in the Fall of 2019 are proving to be providential and helpful, especially the models which combine onsite and online learning and directly involve the parents in their child’s catechetical experience. As you make your plans, please recognize that the likelihood for Onsite Parish Religious Education is not high unless the parish program is small. Given the realities of our current situation, we highly recommend that each parish consider the following two basic approaches to religious education:

+ ***The Weekly Onsite Parish Religious Education Approach*** where it can be done safely and in accordance with all state requirements for social distancing and safety and following the directives of Archdiocesan authorities.

+ ***The Family-Based Parish Religious Education Approach*** which combines at-home learning led by the parent and oversight by the pastor through the direction of the parish director/coordinator of religious education. A meeting between the parent and the parish director/coordinator every fourth week helps the parent prepare for the religious education sessions of the coming weeks. How this approach will be specifically implemented depends upon how the pastor and the director/coordinator shape the structure to meet the particular parish needs.

Basic Program Curriculum: Archdiocesan Guidelines

The basic curriculum for all programs is the *Archdiocesan Guidelines for Catechesis, Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 6*, and those for Grades 7 and 8. The Archdiocesan Guidelines as the non-negotiable basis for all our programs will insure that the children, youth and their families are receiving the essential content of our faith, along with its implications for Christian living, the spirituality that flows from it, and the Scripture and Church teaching that form its bedrock.

The updated Guidelines for Grades 1 through 6 were completed in 2019 and the updated Guidelines for Grades 7 and 8 are now in their final stages of completion.

Program Resources: Lesson plans for Guidelines and Publishers' Online Resources

In late August, you will receive lesson plans for each concept or "band" in the Archdiocesan Guidelines, Grades 1 through 6. These Guidelines lesson plans are to be used in every grade level no matter which model and which publisher's resources you have chosen.

In addition, during the course of the year, each parish program will continue to use the religious education text books and materials provided by the publishing company chosen by the director/coordinator and the pastor. These companies have responded to the "sheltering-in-place" demands of these past months by dedicating much expertise, creativity, labor, and funding to increasing their resources and capacities to serve families online.

Training of Directors and Coordinators

The Basic Leadership Training Course and the Advanced Leadership Program will be offered in variations of online and onsite formats depending on the responses that the corona virus pandemic will necessitate.

Training of Catechists

Catechist Formation continues to be offered in online and virtual formats. The regional catechetical directors, in consultation with the directors and coordinators of their region, will offer the Catechist Formation courses according to local parish needs.

Assistance to You in the Implementation of Your Program

Sr. Joan and the central office staff of the Catechetical Office will continue to be present and available to you, providing direction and support

The Regional Catechetical Director will continue to provide immediate direction as well as individual guidance to each director and coordinator in the region through regional meetings and individual contact by phone, email and web-based consults.

Project Inspiration, to which many of you have contributed, is provided as a source of practical ideas for the various implementation possibilities. It puts at your fingertips a compendium of how your colleagues throughout the Archdiocese are creatively implementing these approaches within the confines of their own parish needs.

Since the 2019 approval of additional models for parish religious education, the *Family Catechesis Advisory Committee* has been working diligently to provide you with practical resources for greater parent involvement in their children's religious education. Although this committee could not have foreseen the pandemic and its current effects, their materials will provide additional help and guidance for your September planning. The work of this committee has resulted in the attached **Parish Agreement/Application for Participation in Family-Based Parish Religious Education Approach**. I want to express great gratitude to the committee members: Sr. Nancy Elizabeth Doran, Chairperson, Margaret Hoblin, Sr. Mary Crucifix Pandullo, Sr. Zelide Ceccagno, Andrea Tighe, Janan Lane.

Directions for Maintaining a Safe Environment for Parish Religious Education in This Time of Covid-19 Pandemic

Please see the attached Document.