



ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK
YOUTH FAITH FORMATION

Memorandum

To: Pastors

From: Ela Milewska, Executive Director
Sr. Joan Curtin, Director, Catechetical Office
Cynthia Psencik, Director, Office of Youth Ministry

RE: Parish Religious Education and Youth Ministry in the Fall of 2020

Date: July 8, 2020

It would be our great desire to give you clear cut directions on exactly how to proceed with parish youth ministry and religious education in the fall of 2020, but as we all have experienced—and our governor has stated—the situation with COVID-19 is fluid and ever-changing. However, we can provide for you some guidelines to help with your planning:

- 1. Commit to offering religious education and youth ministry for all grades in the fall, no matter the situation.** Our young people and their families need the connection to the parish community and the ability to grow in their Catholic faith. Whether your programs will be onsite, remote, or a blended, it is important now to make a *commitment* that your parish community will be offering intentional religious education of all grades and youth ministry.
- 2. Consider making two/three plans.** One plan should be made if no religious education/youth ministry can be done onsite at the parish. This remote formation plan should be under the guidance of the parish D/CRE and youth ministry coordinator. It will need to make creative use of digital platforms and the resources provided our department, publishers, and ministry organizations. The second plan should be made for a blended onsite/remote approach. This may include breaking participants/families in small groups for the onsite component to ensure social distancing practices can be followed. Lastly, the third plan can be an onsite approach. Given social distancing regulations and other precautions, this plan will not be feasible for most parishes, but may work only with small parishes. See attached for more detailed information.

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3. **Make use of the religious education models promulgated last year and curriculum guidelines.** Some of models of religious education shared last year already take into account a blended onsite/remote program of family-based learning under the guidance of the director/coordinator of religious education. The curriculum guidelines for grades 1-6 and new guidelines (available in the fall) for grades 7-8 provide a foundation for designing the content of your programs. Additionally, almost all publisher materials revised and expanded to meet the needs of family-based formation. See attached for more detailed information.
4. **Recognize that cleaning and sanitization will be required for onsite programs.** We are currently working with the Catholic schools on the exact cleaning and sanitation requirements for onsite programs. We will share the details with you once they are finalized.
5. **All programs must continue to follow Safe Environment protocols whether onsite or online.** Your D/CREs and youth ministry coordinators have been provided with updated guidelines for the safe use of Zoom and other digital technologies.
6. **We are here to help.** The purpose of the Department of Youth Faith Formation is to help in the young people in your parishes and their families to continue to encounter Jesus and grow in their Catholic faith.