



ARCHDIOCESE OF SANTA FE
OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
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**RECOMMENDATIONS OF BEST PRACTICES
FOR PARISH BASED RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
FOR THE 2020-2021 CATECHETICAL YEAR**

The below are recommendations for safely resuming both non-gathered (distanced) and gathered (in-person) faith formation classes. These recommendations are based on the following guiding principles:

Out of fraternal love, we will keep the Protection, Safety, Wellbeing, and Health of our children, families, and entire parish community at the forefront in resuming catechetical ministry.

(Non-gathered) Socially distanced (at home) Faith Formation

- Parish Catechetical Leaders should be prepared to offer a workable, non-gathered (at-home, or virtual/web-based) Religious Education (Faith Formation/Catechism) program for the year.
- The registration process should maintain social distance by using on-line, mailed or drop off forms
- Safely compile 'at home' packets for parents/children (See Attachment A)
- Check in regularly by phone, video chat, email, Flock Note, etc. with parents/guardians/grandparents to see how they are doing (not just with classes but as a family trying to stay safe and well), if they need help or prayers, if they have questions, etc.
- Creatively involve the entire family in the lessons and interactive activities that provide depth and fun
- Recommend websites, videos, etc. for parents to add greater formation opportunities (MRC website: <https://archdiosf.booksys.net/opac/archdiosf/index.html#menuHome>)
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(Non-gathered) Virtual Faith Formation

- Parish Catechetical Leaders should be prepared to offer a workable, non-gathered (at-home, or virtual/web-based) Religious Education (Faith Formation/Catechism) program for the year.
- The registration process should maintain social distance by using on-line, mailed or drop off forms
- Obtain parent /legal guardian permission for student to use web conference/internet based platform based on safe environment protocols which also includes recognition that classes will be recorded and stored for a time (See Attachment B)
- Obtain parent/legal guardian permission for parish to post photos or screen-shots on parish website, official Facebook, Instagram etc. (See Attachments C.1 & C.2)
- Have two (2) safe environment certified adult (VIRTUS trained) catechists or youth ministers present for on-line or phone conference classes at all times
- Ensure adult catechists stay connected/on-line ("in the room") until every child logs off the platform so children are not left on the platform unsupervised.
- Ensure protocols for the platform being followed to keep participants safe and protect them from on-line predators

- Be aware of family limitations to technology and scheduling conflicts based on school requirements or parent work requirements and be flexible regarding attendance and participation
 - Provide alternatives for those without Wi-Fi access, those who have data limits on smart phones, or have limited shared devices.
- Check in regularly via phone, video chat, email, Flock Note, etc. with parents/guardians/grandparents to see how they are doing, if they need help or prayers, if they have questions, etc.
- Provide a Code of Conduct for those participating in virtual classes (See Sample Permission regarding appropriate behavior and dress, participants remain in common area of home where parents can monitor).
 - Code of conduct would apply to parents, grandparents, godparents who join in the class discussions
- Address bad behavior of the child with child and parents as soon as possible (a parent or guardian should be in the vicinity of the area the child is connected to the class)
- Access additional resources offered by Catholic publishers for on-line learning.
 - On-line components that complement text books for faith formation as well as worksheets, etc. (See Attached Supplemental Resource list)
 - Religious Education publishers offer webinars on “how to” use their on-line services and any associated costs
- Ensure that any video or other links provided are authentic Catholic teaching
 - Check with your pastor or the Archdiocesan Pastoral Ministries Offices if you do not know or are uncertain.

(Gathered) In-person (classroom) Faith Formation:

- Know the parish facility’s capacity (number of people allowed in each room) and how many children and catechists make up no more than the percentage allowed by State of NM Health Order Guidelines and, where applicable, the orders of the Pueblo Governors. (See attachment)
- Train catechists and volunteers with regard to safety and health protocols of social distancing, cleaning, disinfecting, etc.
 - Catholic Mutual, NM Department of Health websites have further information
 - Learn common symptoms of COVID-19 and what to watch for in themselves and children
- Schedule cleaning and disinfecting of spaces used
 - Know whose responsibility it will be to ensure cleaning/disinfecting happens
 - Parishes may have janitorial staff taking care of the church; but, they may not be responsible for other parts of the parish plant (i.e. classrooms)
 - Ensure there are sufficient supplies and materials needed (disinfectant, gloves, masks, etc.)
 - Be aware that parishes with large groups of children and multiple other formation ministries who share a common space may find this task more complicated and may require greater effort in planning.
 - Identify frequently touched areas (door handles, tables, desks, chairs, light switches, copy machines, etc.)
- Limit non-essential visitors

- Set up rooms with a minimum of 6' distance of individual space for catechists, children/youth
 - Children youth should all be facing the same direction (i.e. desks, tables & chairs, mats, etc.)
 - Use a larger facility if the classroom space is too small to distance (i.e. parish hall, church, gym, etc.) for formation classes
- Provide FDA approved hand sanitizer for every classroom if there are no hand washing stations
- Stagger arrival/dismissal times, bathroom visits, etc. to avoid large group gatherings
- Avoid instances where masks would have to be removed such as meals, snacks, etc.
- Provide or recommend children bring bottled water rather than using water fountains or sinks
 - Water should be consumed outside of classroom
- Ensure each individual (catechists, children, youth, guests) wears a mask (3-ply) while at parish facilities.
 - Those who are medically excused from wearing a mask should have accommodations made for them to participate in non-gathered formation options.
- Consider use of a COVID-19 screening questionnaire (See Attachment E) and/or take temperatures (100.4° +) for catechetical staff, children, visitors (i.e. parents needing to pick up a child or be in a classroom for special needs children)
- Encourage those who are ill to stay home
- Encourage those who are high-risk to stay home and provide non-gathered formation opportunities.
- Ensure that books and other materials are not shared by children.
 - Each child should take possession of and be responsible for bringing books or materials to class each session.
 - If possible, text books or workbooks, folders, etc. may be stored at the parish facility if each child has a specific location where their materials may be kept separately (cubby, desk, etc.) and only the individual child accesses the materials.
- Explore new ways of group tasks, projects, community service, retreats that would not require gathering in groups or sharing supplies (See Attachment F)
- Avoid any activities that include contact between participants (i.e. games, holding hands, etc.)
- Provide alternatives to gathered/in-person catechesis for parents who are concerned about their child attending class.
 - Let empathy and compassion be your guide for parents concerned about the health and safety of their child, family, etc.
 - No "mandatory" in-person classes, community service, projects, etc.