



COVID-19 Considerations for Evangelization & Catechesis Programming

Introduction

An Encounter with Christ who Overcomes All Distance

We speak of “programming” in Evangelization and Catechesis, but at the center of the ministries that fall under these categories, we find not a program, but a person. Evangelization centers upon an encounter with the Risen Christ. Every program, process, or curriculum in these ministries serves this end, not vice versa. We are constantly reminded that we are in unique and unprecedented times, yet we must remember that Christ always goes before us to light the way. We must also remember that the Gospel truth of Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8).

Yet we also encounter him in ever changing and ever new ways. While we work to adapt our methodology to new and changing situations — which we must always do in this ministry — let us remember that the core of our mission has not changed: facilitating an encounter with the Risen Christ who constantly invites us and those with whom we minister deeper into the relationship of communion with the Triune God.

The logistics and “how” of evangelization may be different under our present circumstances, but our goal remains the same. With that said, the considerations listed in this document are designed to outline some of the limitations our present situation presents and offer some guidance in facilitating this encounter with the Living God with those limitations in mind. However, let us do so with an air of hope. Even in the era of “social distancing,” we must remember that the grace of Christ can be present everywhere, overcoming every distance that we cannot physically traverse.

General Programming Considerations

Waivers

- Families will be expected to sign a waiver for each minor participating in in-person programming.
- The waiver is provided by the diocese. It can be accessed here: [Youth Activities COVID Waiver](#)

Remote Evangelization & Catechesis Options

- This may be considered program-wide (for everyone either temporarily or indefinitely) or in a limited form as an alternative or back-up.
- Limited in-person sessions can be supplemented by remote sessions or activities.
- Remote catechesis could make use of digital options or hard copies.
 - Distribution of materials can take place a variety of ways.
 - Digital resources can be disseminated via email, text, social media, or a Learning Management System (LMS).

- Hard copy materials can be mailed, distributed after or before liturgy, distributed in small gathering of individuals or families (that meet the guidelines below), or even in a ‘drive through’ car line.
- Most catechetical textbook publishers and other Catholic media organizations offer digital and multimedia components. Some have even developed a fully customized digital LMS. Contact the diocesan office corresponding to your ministry for more information on the various offerings available.
- One can also use one of the many free LMS options available to make a custom portal (your corresponding diocesan office can also help you with developing this).
- Remember that, even if you plan to return to in-person ministry, many individuals and families may not feel safe in such gatherings or may have to temporarily isolate due to exposure to COVID-19. Rather than excluding, we should strive to meet their needs pastorally by giving an alternate, remote option.
- Even if not implemented program-wide, be ready to switch to a remote option if the need presents itself again.
- When utilizing digital content, consider forms of engagement that are both synchronous (live sessions) and asynchronous (sessions and components that can be accessed at any time) .
- If implementing digital remote catechesis or a hybrid model, have a plan for those who have limited access to the internet. This could include downloadables, hard copies, removable media, etc.
- **Additional Suggestions:**
 - When working with minors, invite parents/caregivers to ‘drop in’ on live sessions or record sessions.
 - Share email addresses or preferred form of contact (of parents/caregivers) with catechists/team members to maintain contact.
 - In a remote setting, simplify communication and activities. Focus on communicating and reinforcing a simple main message.
 - Consider focusing on and engaging the entire family as the ‘Domestic Church’.

Limit Number of People Gathered at Once

- Consider a model that involves rotating groups at different times or different weeks based on the number of participants, facility considerations, and the number of catechists, team members, etc. available.

While Formulating Your Plan

- Communicate with neighboring parishes in your area so that they know what you are planning and you know what they are planning.
 - Attending deanery/regional meetings is highly recommended as a way to meet this end. In fact, this is one of the important reasons we gather.
 - If you are unsure of when and where your deanery or region meets, contact the diocesan office corresponding to your ministry.
- Ensure you have a plan for sacramental preparation. While sacraments are not the metaphorical ‘carrots’ to keep people going to catechesis or other parish programming, the task of making sure the faithful are properly prepared to receive the sacraments is an important catechetical task.
- Yet, at the same time, we should not avoid our other responsibilities for evangelizing and catechizing the faithful of all ages and situations.

Encounter & Accompaniment

- Remember that the encounter with Christ is primary in Evangelization. We must design our programming to facilitate this end.
- Additionally, a major factor in Evangelization at all times, but especially during troubled times, is *accompaniment*. As those involved in ministry, we are called to walk alongside those with whom we minister.
- Therefore, personal interaction of some kind is necessary. If in-person sessions are limited, consider supplementing with alternate means (e.g. teleconferencing with small groups or families, phone calls, etc.).

Considerations for In-Person Sessions for Evangelization & Catechetical Ministry

Planning for Arrival & Departure

- Have a plan for orderly and ‘socially-distant’ arrival and departure.
- Screen individuals coming in to see if they are exhibiting any of the symptoms of COVID-19.
 - These symptoms include fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
 - Those who exhibit any of these symptoms should be asked to return home.
- Take temperatures with a non-contact thermometer.
 - Those with a temperature of 100.4 or over should be asked to return home.
- Those who have members of their household who have either tested positive or are exhibiting symptoms should be asked to remain home.
- Be sure to allow sufficient time at sessions for screening and distancing.
- Devise a plan that maintains a 6-foot radius around all adults, minors, and parents/caregivers.
- Try to minimize physical contact with doors and door handles during this time (e.g. leaving doors *temporarily* open during entrance and egress).
- Ask everyone (minors and adults) to wash/sanitize hands before and after sessions.
- Be sure to provide easy access to hand sanitizing/handwashing stations.

During Sessions & Meeting Times

- Maintain distancing of a 6-foot radius at all times from arrival until departure (until minors get back into vehicles with parents/caregivers).
- Remember to especially encourage and remind everyone to distance whenever individuals are not seated.
- Try to limit the amount of proximal contact between individuals over time by utilizing assigned seating and assigned small groups.
- Facial coverings are highly recommended at all times for both minors and adults [if a local ordinance is in place requiring facial covering, follow that ordinance].
- Make sure that hand sanitizing/handwashing stations are easily accessible to all.
- Consider using outdoor facilities or larger well-ventilated areas when possible, safe, and practical.

- Due to the generally short duration of evangelization and catechetical sessions, the sharing of foods is discouraged, but if using them, use pre-packaged snacks and food with handwashing before and after consumption.
- Try to limit physical contact with surfaces, such as doors and door handles.

Cleaning Before & After Sessions

- All cleaning and sanitizing procedures should follow CDC recommendations: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>
- Sanitize facilities and objects in use before and after usage, including classrooms, common spaces, lavatories, etc.
- Be sure to thoroughly sanitize all items with which people make physical contact.
- If space is shared with a school, be sure that the sanitizing procedure is in accord with the plan for that building (consult with school leadership on this matter).
- Consider using bags of materials (pencils, books, etc.) identified for the use of each individual or having individuals transport their own books and materials to and from every session.
- Consider budgeting for additional cleaning staff as necessary.

'Tactile' Methods of Catechesis

- Forms of evangelization and catechesis that utilize especially tactile methodology, such as Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, should be carefully structured to maintain the above standards.
- Consider smaller group sizes and individualized plans for participants to allow necessary social spacing.
- Consider limiting activities available in a given session.
- Perhaps even consider one extra person to discreetly sanitize items during sessions.
- Shared items that cannot be sanitized should not be used.

Positive Diagnosis of COVID-19 & Cases of Exposure

- Develop a process for diagnosed cases and cases of exposure within our facilities.
- Notify local health officials and follow their recommendations with such cases.
- Individuals with a positive COVID-19 diagnosis should not return until cleared by a medical provider.
- Those who have been exposed to COVID-19 should be asked to quarantine as current DHEC/CDC guidelines prescribe.
- All those who may have been exposed to COVID-19 at a given meeting or session are to be notified, while maintaining the confidentiality of the individuals diagnosed.