

Forming Faith in Covid19 & Beyond: A Resource Guide for Parishes



“Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you.”

Pope Francis ~The Joy of the Gospel , no. 164

Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany
Office of Lay Ministry & Parish Faith Formation



***Go and make disciples of all nations!
Matthew 28:19***

***The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch,
but also in communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ.
General Directory for Catechesis (1997), no. 80***

For the past several months, as we have lived through the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have tried to provide faith formation and youth ministry in new ways - ways that have stretched our skills, pulled us out of our comfort zones, and yet, at the same time, also called forth the very best of our creativity and imagination. Despite the many challenges, we have seen God's grace flowing in abundance.

Now, we are beginning to ponder what shape and form our faith formation and youth ministry programs might take in the fall and beyond. Specific guidance from governmental authorities and agencies has not yet been issued. Nor do we know if a resurgence of the virus will necessitate pausing our plans during the coming year. Such uncertainty is unsettling.

However, we are missionary disciples! Our mission is to share the love of the Lord Jesus Christ – the same Jesus who promised to be with us always – even in a time of pandemic! So, we encourage parishes to begin to plan now, and to take the lessons learned from the past three months into that planning. With the help of a committee of catechetical and youth ministry leaders, we offer the following both as a resource and as a reminder that we are not alone. Jesus is with us! And we are with one another!

This resource is not the final word and there will no doubt be updates as developments unfold. As always, the staff of the Office of Lay Ministry and Parish Faith Formation stands ready to provide consultations, and we hope that you will share your plans, ideas and resources with us and with one another, especially on our private Facebook page [RCDA Faith Formation Leaders](#).

Setting the Focus: Friendship with Jesus

The quotes at the top of this document really set the focus for planning. As leaders of faith formation and youth ministry, we are the animators of a wide variety of opportunities where adults, youth, and children can come into communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ, and thereby more deeply accept, understand and live their identity as his disciples. This should be the goal of all that we do, and the focus of all our planning. In our zeal, sometimes we become overly anxious about covering every item in a curriculum or every topic on a certain age/grade level. Perhaps a better – and more freeing – focus would be to start by asking: *How can we encourage people in their friendship with Jesus?* Then all the wonderful aspects of our faith as covered in any curriculum can take on new life!

Put another way, we can still provide systematic and intentional catechesis even if we adjust our focus a bit or use a different model. While there has always been some form of [curriculum guidelines](#) in the Diocese of Albany, parishes have been encouraged to use them to develop their faith formation/youth ministry programs in creative ways according to their local needs and resources. For the past several decades (at least), parishes have never been mandated to hold a certain number of catechetical sessions per year. That was, and still is, a local decision reached through collaborative dialogue between the pastor/parish life coordinator and the catechetical/youth ministry leader. There are many ways to provide a comprehensive catechesis with the goal of having participants meet and fall in love with Jesus Christ. However, choosing a model that might work for your families – pandemic or not – requires prayerful discernment.

Praying Our Planning

This seems obvious: pray before you plan. Yet, so often this prayer, while genuine, can be a bit perfunctory. Rather, we urge you to pray as a staff in a way that truly invites the Holy Spirit to help you discern what is being asked of you. For example, *What does bringing people into communion and intimacy with Jesus look like for us, right here, right now in this parish? What gifts do we have? What gifts do we need? How can we collaborate with others (e.g. nearby parishes)? What blessings/challenges is this time of pandemic offering us?*

Led by the Spirit to New Directions

The abrupt cancellation of our gathered programs drove us all into new directions. We know that the Holy Spirit was working in those rather confusing and even frenzied early days of the pandemic. Now, as we pray our planning, we must strive to remain open to where the Spirit is leading. We learned that it is not easy – or perhaps even advisable- to take what we have “always done” and simply transfer it to an online format. Perhaps the Spirit is inviting us to focus on how we can create relationships and share faith with families in ways that we have never imagined before. Perhaps, too, the Spirit is leading us to new ways of “being” leaders and “doing” ministry – not just for this time of pandemic but also for the time when COVID-19 is no longer as great a threat in our world.

Parents and Other Adults

This pandemic has reminded us again of the value, dignity, and powerful influence of the Domestic Church. Every home, no matter its size or composition, should see itself as a domestic church. As Bishop Scharfenberger reminded us in the early days of the pandemic, “make your home a little church.” Indeed, it is this network of little domestic churches that actually forms the parish. Therefore, parents – and all adults – need to be supported, nurtured, and encouraged in their own friendship with Jesus – so that they can share this with their children and others in their lives. When planning, consider ways that you can enrich the domestic church and especially the adults who live there.

Catechetical and Youth Ministry Leaders as Coaches

Another aspect of planning – pandemic or not - is to see our role as catechetical/youth ministry leaders akin to that of a “coach” for families/domestic churches. Good sports coaches are positive, enthusiastic, supportive, respectful, patient, knowledgeable, able to impart skills and conditioning exercises to improve those skills. Even more akin to our ministry is the role of a “doula” or birth companion who offers information, advocacy, as well as support during the birthing process. We are helping to give birth to disciples of Jesus – no matter their age or stage of life. Some questions to consider then: *How can we best “give birth” to disciples of Jesus in our local situation? What resources do our families need so that they can be mothers [fathers], and brothers [sisters] of Jesus who “hear the Word of God and act on it?” (Luke 8:21). How can we best encourage them to use those resources?*

Being Flexible and Understanding

Being flexible and understanding are good traits for ministry at any time. However, the pandemic has taught us all to be even more flexible and understanding, both in our daily lives and also in our ministries. In planning, take into account that we may need to be realistic about what we ask of our families, especially if we have to enter another period of “pause”. Realize, too, that, when and if we are allowed to gather in person - some may choose not to send their children/young people to gathered programs at the parish. This should be handled with the utmost pastoral care and sensitivity. Planning ahead on how we will walk with those families is essential.

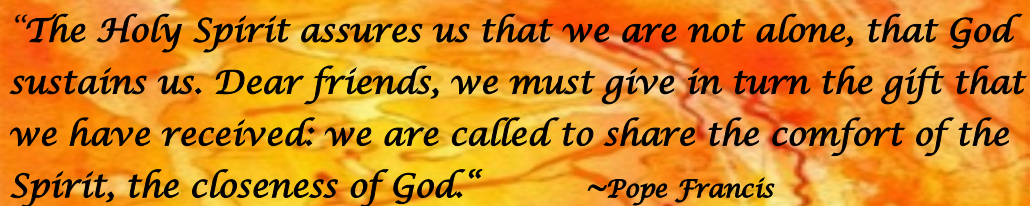
Conclusion

While this conclusion was being written, Pope Francis gifted the Universal Church with a new *Directory for Catechesis*. Although building upon the previous two catechetical directories of 1971 and 1997, the new *Directory* calls us more boldly to embrace a “kerygmatic catechesis.” That is, a catechesis that constantly announces the good news of God’s saving Mercy in Jesus Christ, especially through the witness of the Christian community. The foundation of such a catechesis is summed up in a word so dear to Pope Francis: *encounter* – a personal encounter with the Merciful God through another person who has experienced God’s mercy. This should be the pattern for the catechist and those being catechized. The new *Directory* calls us to a “pastoral conversion” – from letting go of “we’ve always done it that way,” to embracing new directions -so as to free catechesis from whatever might limit its effectiveness today.

In the end, then, our planning for this fall and beyond is not just about the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather, it is about reflecting upon the signs of our own time in light of the Gospel (*cf. Gaudium et Spes - The Church in the Modern World, no. 4*), and then discerning how the Spirit is calling us to reimagine catechesis as a result. From the earliest days of the Church, this is what missionary disciples – especially those disciples called to be catechetical and youth ministry leaders - have always done. So we must do the same.

But not alone. We do this together as a community of catechetical and youth ministry leaders. To that end, we offer some models, resources, and examples to assist each parish’s discernment. Adopting a new model, or enhancing your current model, requires time for discernment and implementation. For the 2020-2021 catechetical year, perhaps the most practical thing would be to discern how your current model can incorporate even just one of the ideas noted above, and also be sufficiently flexible and nimble if COVID-19 requires us to pause again. Also, do not feel compelled to begin in September especially if you sense families are facing stress in adjusting to the start of an uncertain school year.

The staff of this office is here to assist you and your parish. So, too, the committee members listed at the end of this document, would be happy to share more about their ideas and insights. May the Holy Spirit continue to enlighten, guide, and strengthen us all!



“The Holy Spirit assures us that we are not alone, that God sustains us. Dear friends, we must give in turn the gift that we have received: we are called to share the comfort of the Spirit, the closeness of God.”

~Pope Francis

Models and Resources

Hybrid Model

This “model” is really more of a strategy

- for modifying your existing program to comply with any COVID-19 related diocesan or New York State guidelines that may impact faith formation/youth ministry programs this fall and beyond, or
- for providing a seamless transition if the catechetical year becomes interrupted due to a spike in COVID-19 cases in the state or your region.

When gathering is permitted, you will conduct your program in your chosen model. Some modification may be needed if you gather less frequently or for shorter amounts of time because of new space arrangements. (See memo of June 10 and accompanying document [Reopening Faith Formation and Youth Ministry Spaces](#) and any further updates.) You may wish to use a “flipped classroom” model, where the actual lesson is done through online or at-home resources, then your gathering is for the purposes of using or responding to what was learned in the online lesson.

When gathering is not permitted, and a home-based format is the only option, proceed with your chosen model in an online format using a platform such as Zoom, Google Meets, etc. Some publishers have online accommodations now built into their basal programs, or offer entirely digital learning platforms (i.e., Sadlier, Our Sunday Visitor, St. Mary’s Press, and more. Consult list at the end of this document). If you don’t go this route, you may wish to choose another model suggested below.

Keeping a personal connection to your families when you are not gathered is very important. Some parishes were very creative with this during the first phase of the COVID quarantine time. Some leaders did home deliveries or parking lot drive-by pickups of hands-on learning packets, Triduum items in a pizza box, gift bags and blessings. Some parishes used Facebook Live or YouTube or Zoom to gather for a story time or a sing-a-long, or a church tour. Keeping that personal connection lets your families know you are present to them even when you cannot gather.



Liturgical Year Model

This way of forming faith is most compatible with what the Church is marking and teaching in its current season. It uses the prayers, Scriptures and symbols of the season as the primary curriculum. The family prepares for Sunday Mass by breaking open the readings, particularly the gospels. After attending Mass (or watching the livestreamed Mass if we are unable to gather), the family uses some of the resources to process and reflect on what they saw and heard, and then make practical application for their lives as they go into the week ahead. They may also explore the liturgical season further. This model can be facilitated in gathered sessions at the parish or by a virtual platform if necessary.



Resources for a liturgical year model:

Pflaum

Gospel Weeklies

<https://www.pflaumweeklies.com/>

Catechetical Crafts for the Liturgical Year – good resource for the leader/catechist

<http://cart.pflaum.com/product.php?productid=17782&page=1>

Learning Centers for Saints – if small groups of families are allowed to gather

<http://cart.pflaum.com/search.php?mode=search&page=1>

Learning Centers for Advent and Lent –if small groups of families are allowed to gather

<http://cart.pflaum.com/product.php?productid=17711&page=1>

Loyola Press

Sunday Connection

<https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/liturgical-year/sunday-connection/>

Liturgical Year resource page

<https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/liturgical-year/>

Liturgy Training Publications

Celebrating Sunday for Catholic Families- <https://www.ltp.org/products/details/CSCF21/celebrating-sunday-for-catholic-families>

We Learn About the Mass

<https://www.ltp.org/products/details/EWLAM2/we-learn-about-mass-second-edition>

We Learn About our Parish Church

<https://www.ltp.org/products/details/EWLPC/we-learn-about-our-parish-church>

From Mass to Mission

<https://www.ltp.org/products/details/FMMC/from-mass-to-mission>

Companion to the Calendar (a resource for catechists)

<https://www.ltp.org/products/details/COMCAL2/companion-to-the-calendar-second-edition>

Morehouse Education Resources – Living the Good News

www.livingthegoodnews.com

Strong Catholic Family Faith Website

<http://www.catholicfamilyfaith.org/masssunday-worship--lectionary-resources.html>

www.sermons4kids.com



Parent Coaching Model

This model can have the dual purpose of forming both adults and children. There are two ways of using this model:

- A) The catechetical leader, or better the leader with a team of people, such as the pastor, parish life coordinator, “master catechists”, etc. may work primarily with parents to help them explore their own faith and to equip them with confidence and skills to share faith with their children.

Resources for a coaching model:

The Pastoral Center

Growing Up Catholic Parent Conversations

<https://pastoral.center/guc-parent-conversations-series>

Pflaum

How to Talk to Children About... (series)

<https://cart.pflaum.com/home.php?cat=21>



- B) The catechetical leader, or better the leader and a team of people such as the pastor, parish life coordinator, “master catechists”, etc., meets with small groups of parents/children together via Zoom, GoogleMeet, another platform, or in person. The catechist moves the lesson along directing parents to lead their children through the process. The catechist may use this coaching method to direct parents through family-based lessons in a basal series you are currently using. This model can be used for sacramental preparation also if gathering is not possible.

Resources for a coaching model:

The Pastoral Center

Growing Up Catholic Faith Stories

<https://pastoral.center/faith-stories>

Helping our Family Whole Family Catechesis

<https://pastoral.center/helping-our-family-live-our-faith>

Growing Up Catholic Sacramental Preparation

<https://pastoral.center/guc-sacramental-prep>

Thematic Model

In this model, a topic is selected for a) the whole year, or b) a season or c) each month. The topic is broken up into segments that can be done in either a gathered, non-gathered (digital), or hybrid (some gathered, some digital) manner. Each session might include a short teaching or story on the theme done via video, prayer, scripture connection, hands-on activity, follow-up resource links or service suggestions. Some possible themes might include: *Reading the Bible, Discovering Jesus, the Kingdom of God, the Mass, The Sacraments, Catholic Social Teachings, Learning to Pray, the Saints....*

Resources for a thematic model might come from digital and printed material from the **major catechetical publishers** and our [Diocesan Curriculum Guidelines](#) found on the RCDA portal.

Other suggestions:

Center for Ministry Development

Fashioning Faith (subscription site) www.fashioningfaith.org

www.catholicfamilyfaith.org

www.catholicicing.com



Mini-Course Model (Younger and Older Adolescents)

A selection of “faith topics” form the curriculum for a given year, or ideally as a sequence over several years. Topics will be chosen from the faith themes that emerge from the four “pillars” of the Catechism, or current issues where life and faith meet. Each mini-course meets for anywhere from 3-6 weeks on a consistent day/time, but not all topics need to meet at the same time. This model respects schedules of families and youth by allowing them to commit to a time that is best for them. It gives youth some autonomy in choosing topics of interest to them. It gives catechists a short-term commitment, as well as the freedom to develop a topic of interest to them. If used in a gathered format, the usual meeting time is 90 minutes, but in an online format, it might be “chunked” in shorter segments.

This model can easily go “hybrid”. In a non-gathered format, the meeting time could start with a large group Zoom, incorporating an ice breaker, prayer, short lesson and hands-on activity/game. Then in the shorter Zoom breakout session, a discussion question or small group activity can happen.

Resources for a mini-course model:

Center for Ministry Development

Youth Ministry Access www.cmdnet.org/yma

[Diocesan Curriculum Guidelines](#)– on the RCDA portal

St. Mary’s Press

www.smp.org (under middle school and high school categories)



Using Faith Witness and Storytelling – A Strategy for All Models

Everyone loves a good story! Stories speak powerfully to both young and old. In fact, this was Jesus' primary method of sharing faith with others. Stories capture our imaginations and lead us to engage in the message they convey.

People witnessing to the power of faith in their own lives can be quite compelling. Are there people in your parish that are willing to share their stories? Are there movies that tell the story of faith in a person's life?

You can begin to build a "library" to be able to present this faith witness/story time either as part of your gathered sessions or online using Facebook Live or another platform on whatever schedule seems best for your program (e.g. bi-weekly, monthly, etc.)

In this model, a catechist/storyteller leads a story lesson – appropriately adapted for the age group. Prepare the hearers by helping them connect their own experience to what they will hear in the story (Have you ever been afraid?, Have you ever felt left out?.....), then read the story with expression. After the story, ask some questions, like, "Who in the story do you feel is most like you?" "If you were asked to write another ending to this story, what would it be?", "What do you think God is doing in this story?". Or provide an activity where they can express how that story might affect their living.

Resources for storybooks:

Loyola Press

<https://store.loyolapress.com/individuals/childrens>

Paraclete Press

<https://paracletepress.com/collections/childrens>

Liguori Publications – inexpensive saints stories

<https://www.liguori.org/store/faith-formation-parish/childrens-ministry-parish.html?p=5>

The Pastoral Center

Growing Up Catholic Faith Stories

<https://pastoral.center/faith-stories>

Resources for movies/witness talks:

YouTube (see "Profiles in Endurance" on Fr. Scott Vanderveer's YouTube Channel)

www.PBS.org

www.wingclips.com

www.odbfilms.com



Appendix A

Parish Examples

The following examples are given to spark creativity and allow for the sharing of ideas. Each parish is unique and therefore is encouraged to develop what best suits their own local situation.

Liturgical Year Model

St. Patrick, Cambridge (Mary Rosmus)

The content of our faith formation program flows from each Sunday's Gospel, and children learn their faith within the rhythms and seasons of the liturgical year. Grouping several grades together works for our small program. Parental involvement has been encouraged.

For K-8:

- Pflaum Gospel Weeklies, now available in print and/or digital formats
- Before COVID-19, we were using the *Gospel for All Ages* gathering rituals with grades K-8 to open each session and then breaking into small groups to work on the Gospel Weeklies. Some parents stayed for this gathering every week. Once a month or so, we had a class for all ages together with parents to explore a theme related to the liturgical season. For these sessions we use various resources including:

Catholicmom.com

Catholicicing.com

- In March, when sessions were cancelled, we mailed the Gospel Weeklies material home and used Facebook and our Lifelong Faith Website to share additional resources with the families. We are currently gathering information on which resources were useful before deciding how to proceed in the fall. We might continue in this same fashion, meet virtually for the opening session and then let the families continue the lessons on their own, meet with parents only (monthly or seasonally), or change to other resources altogether.

For the Whole Parish:

I have used some of the Advent and Lenten resources from Illustrated Ministry (www.illustratedministry.com) to create a full parish non-gathered activity. I have not thought through how this would work in COVID world, but I know they are offering a virtual Vacation Bible School (Compassion Camp) so they may develop some plans or suggestions that would work in a virtual environment.

St. Joseph, Stuyvesant Falls (Lisanne Jensen)

K-5 Gospel-Based Session

At the beginning, after the opening prayer, the children listen to a short description of that day's topic and activity. They are then assigned to tables for the activity. While most sessions focus on that Sunday's Gospel reading, sometimes the sessions are more related to the liturgical season or a service project.

The sessions usually involve a mix of table work and a game, a prayer activity and a service project, a study of that Sunday's Gospel and/or one of the readings, etc. One activity that has been popular with the children is choosing a random Bible verse and having to illustrate that verse.

St. Mary, Cocksackie (Bob Desrosiers)

Family Prayer Service (format of the Liturgy of the Word) based on Lectionary Readings of the recent Sunday.

Record a Facebook Live Session of our family actually doing the Prayer Service. This gives a model for what families can do themselves, or if not, we include them virtually into our family circle. We plan to imbed the weekly Homily and also include discussion questions.

Parent Coaching Model

Immaculate Conception, Glenville (Christine Goss)

Note: This example was developed as a creative idea for the purposes of this resource guide. Implementing this model requires thoughtful consideration regarding individual family circumstances. Flexibility and follow-up are necessary and creativity may be needed for families who are unable to fulfill their role.

The outline below envisions implementing this model on a monthly schedule. However, it could also be done along some sort of a seasonal schedule (e.g. three month blocks with time also given to Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter). Note: preparation for First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, and Confirmation would be separate and distinct processes.

Week 1:

Parent Coaching. The goal for this coaching week is to help parents become confident in the lessons for that month as well as to get to know families and to build deeper connections with the parents. Coaching responsibility could be shared between faith formation staff and catechists – perhaps dividing families alphabetically between the number of volunteers/staff available. This could be done in person as a parent meeting or in small groups, virtually using a platform like Zoom or even one-on-one appointments. Recommendation would be to offer all of these options for parents even if gatherings are allowed, and ideally encouraging parents to select different formats for their coaching week throughout the year.

Week 2:

Parent-Led at Home Session or Catechist-Led Session at the parish for whole family (depending on COVID-19 restrictions), or a combination of both.

Week 3:

Family At-Home Project – a hands on family activity or project that connects to the lesson for the month. This could also be a parish-sponsored service project.

Week 4:

Catechist Led Session for Younger & Older Adolescents. It would be especially good to allow younger and older adolescents the opportunity to gather with their peers, whether at the parish or in a virtual format.

Thematic Model

Immaculate Conception, Glenville (Christine Goss)

Note: This example was developed as creative idea for the purposes of this resource guide.

Example for a year-long theme is “The Fruits of the Holy Spirit”:

September: An afternoon or evening of prayer where families compose Family “Mission” Statements– can be done gathered, in small groups, or via zoom after providing families take home kits. Families might decide which fruits of the Holy Spirit they will strive to live in their day to day life as a family.

October: Highlight a Fruit of the Holy Spirit

November: Highlight a Fruit of the Holy Spirit

December/Advent: Connect the season to one of the Fruits of the Holy Spirit (e.g. love, patience)

January/February: Highlight a Fruit of the Holy Spirit each month

March/Lent: Connect to one of the Fruits of the Holy Spirit (e.g. self-control, faithfulness)

April: Highlight a Fruit of the Holy Spirit

May: Highlight any Fruits of the Holy Spirit not covered

Closing Prayer Celebration

St. Joseph, Stuyvesant Falls (Lisanne Jensen)

Example of a monthly theme used in an Intergenerational setting:

These large-group sessions, open to all parishioners as well as Faith Formation families, take place once a month from 10:30 a.m. to noon in the parish hall on Sundays. We call it “Extended-Family Faith Enrichment.” Each session has a theme: September, “Nurturing Our Catholic Identity”; October, “Mary and the Communion of Saints”; November, “The Holy Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation”; December: “Who Is Jesus?”; no session in January; February, “The Holy Sacraments of Healing”; March (supposed to be “The Eucharist and Lifelong Service”); no session in April; and May (supposed to be our closing, with a “Prayer” theme). For each gathering, I set up a prayer table with items that relate to that session’s theme. At the beginning, everyone gathers as a large group for the “opening,” which includes prayer and a topic presentation. (Sometimes I also show a short, meaningful video clip as part of the opening talk.) Then, participants break into small groups based on age/sacramental level (kindergarten through First Eucharist; Grades 3-5; middle school; adults). For each group, I make sure to include a bilingual catechist who can assist

in both English and Spanish. I also provide bilingual materials for each group. The small groups explore the session topic more in depth, in age- appropriate ways (and crafts are usually part of the curriculum for younger children!). Each group receives a set of the same discussion questions as a jumping-off point for conversation. Toward the end of the session, everyone reconvenes and share what they did/talked about in their small groups. The sessions always end with large-group prayer. Sometimes in the large group, we engage in activities together, such as a service project, praying a “living Rosary,” and building a Jesse Tree on the wall. I also make sure to have handouts available as families are leaving so that they can read further at home. These intergenerational sessions are in addition to the regular First Eucharist and Confirmation preparation sessions that are scheduled twice a month.

Mater Christi Parish, Albany (Bernadette McSparron)

Theme-based learning centers where the amount of “traffic” can be controlled. Since they are displayed for a determined length of time, families can visit in a physically distant manner.

<https://www.materchristireligioused.com/fam-events.html>

St. Matthew, Voorheesville (Joy Galarneau)

Yearly themes in the Generations of Faith (Intergenerational model).

<https://www.stmatthewsvoorheesville.org/generations-of-faith.html>

Mini-Course Model

Immaculate Conception, Glenville (Christine Goss)

A full-description of a multi-year mini-course model (Grades 7-10) can be found on

<https://www.icglenville.com/youth-ministries-gr-7-12>

St. James, Chatham (Lisanne Jensen)

For Grades 6-9, I divide our time from September through April in half, and catechists focus on a specific topic for each of those halves. For example, our sixth-grade sessions explore the Old Testament and Jewish roots for the first half of the year, including a field trip to our local synagogue, and then end around Christmastime with the topic “Encountering Jesus” (St. Mary’s Press). Another topic is then presented for the second half of the year. Sometimes, too, catechists choose to present four-week sessions that examine a particular topic, then switch topics for the next four weeks.

St. Patrick, Cambridge (Mary Rosmus)

Whole-parish mini-course on the Mass -

<https://www.ltp.org/products/details/FMM/from-mass-to-mission#/> -

"From Mass to Mission: Understanding the Mass and Its Significance for Our Christian Life". It comes in versions for children, teens, and adults. The printed booklets would be easy to send home. The sessions include wonderful videos and could, I think, be done virtually. There is a suggested movie series to accompany the teen and adult sessions. We had great success with the series when we used it a few years ago.

Hybrid Model- A Combination of Gathered and Non-Gathered Experiences

As noted in the Models and Resources section above, a hybrid model can be accomplished in a variety of ways, such as using a "flipped-classroom" approach, using online resources or virtual learning platforms from catechetical publishers, using Zoom or another web-conferencing platform to present a modified version of a session, etc. The examples illustrate how hybrid models can lend themselves to creative approaches.

St. Joseph, Stuyvesant Falls (Lisanne Jensen)

A mix of in-person, independent study, and community opportunities. For example, once a month the following could happen: an in-person (or virtual) gathering that is similar to a traditional classroom model; an outing of some sort or service project – virtually done if needed; and online/independent study work that can be done at home, at the young person's pace. Each month could have a theme, much like the intergenerational sessions. As far as the outing/service project, it could involve a field trip to someplace like the Divine Mercy Shrine in Stockbridge or St. Joseph's Spiritual Life Center in Valatie, a parish apple-picking outing (to help build community), volunteering at a soup kitchen or food pantry, etc.

St. Kateri Tekakwitha, Schenectady (Lisa Kuban)

Not knowing what COVID-19 may bring, we are planning for several start times for the adolescent program, with the option of moving short-term sessions to an online format.

1. October return: Regular weekly program.
2. October return: Alternate weeks utilizing largest rooms to maximize appropriate distancing.
3. The focus for the Fall term will be retreat and service focused. Youth will be required to attend a three-hour retreat, an evening of prayer (rosary or adoration) and community service. Each evening of prayer will begin with a mini-lesson: origin, how-to participate and role in 2020. During the Spring term return to weekly instruction.

January start: Consider using a topic-based curriculum within a time-modified program. For example, if the topic is prayer. "Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God." (St. John Damascene)

Look at forms of prayer: adoration, contrition, petition and thanksgiving, prayers in the Mass.

Ways to pray: reading the Bible, lectio divina, visio divina, Rosary, Ignatian Contemplation, stations of the cross, Adoration of the Eucharist, Taize, novena, chaplets and free form (personal expression).

How do you pray: walking, sitting, kneeling, laying down, journaling, etc.

How to create a personal prayer space.

St. Michael the Archangel, South Glens Falls (Jim Gorman)

When we were unable to gather this past March, we found that the materials we were already using fit well into an at-home model, and could also fit into a hybrid model using Zoom or some other platform if the coming year requires it.

For Pre-K and Kindergarten:

RCL Benziger's catechetical materials have lesson plans that are easy for parents. This could also be done using Zoom meetings with catechists.

For 1st through 5th Grade:

We will expand our use of Saint Mary's Press **Go, Seek, and Find** since the catechists, children, and families in 2nd grade loved it this past year. The program is based on using the children's Bible with the lesson plans. There is a take home activity which the children bring back each week. They then get a sticker on a map to show their progress. The materials can be used in the classroom or by parents at home. Definitely good for hybrid programs

For Middle School, Grades 6, 7, & 8:

We have used St. Mary's Press **Catholic Connections** for many years. The catechists and youth have liked the program so we will continue using this resource. Each student has a book. If we can't meet in person the material can be adapted to use at home or virtually with the catechist.

For High School, Grades 9 & 10 and Confirmation Preparation

Total Catechesis, which is built on the Four Pillars of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, has been the foundation for this program. The material allows catechists to use their own creativity, and so this could adapt well to a hybrid program.

St. Mary, Clinton Heights (Maureen Billa)

Note: This example is still under development. The plan is to implement it for the 2020-2021 catechetical year either in person or using virtual means. In addition to being an example of a Hybrid Model, this is also an example of a Thematic Model with a year-long theme for the entire parish.

A hybrid model for the whole parish that will work well whether you are meeting in person, using social media/a virtual platform, or as family formation. At present, in addition to opportunities being developed for adults and multi-generations together, this model also envisions holding sessions based on the Emmaus Story theme for children and youth in 4-week blocks, four times during the year.

If our goal is to be a Catholic Christian person, these four parts of the Emmaus Story (Luke 24:13-35) will serve as our objectives and a measuring stick as to how we are doing.

1. Knowing who Jesus Is: Building a relationship with Jesus through Prayer

In order to recognize someone or something, we need to know who and what they are...

Having a living relationship with Jesus and a commitment to the Christian Life, too often we take for granted, we need to own our baptismal call and identify with a public commitment to Christ and His way of life. This can be done by having an active prayer life and the ability to develop a constant conversation with Jesus.

Ideas and Resources:

- Total Catechesis, Christian Prayer (Saint Mary's Press)
- How Catholics Pray (Loyola Press)
- Bustedhalo.com (great for young adults)
- Prayer Workshops: Experiencing different forms of Prayer
- Meeting Christ through Meditation (guided meditation for children of all ages)
- Women's Retreat (Spiritual Spa)

2. Knowing the Scriptures: Liturgy of the Word

Each of us needs to take time to read and reflect on the Scriptures, we need to explore them and allow Christ to speak to us through them. Following the Liturgical Calendar is one of the best ways to experience scripture, and the entire parish is reflecting on the same scriptures.

Ideas and Resources:

- Saint Mary's Press mobile learning kidsliturgy@smp.org
- The Catholic Toolbox: one of my favorite resources, tons of information and ideas
- Sunday Connection: Loyola Press
- Gospel Connections for Teens (Saint Mary's Press)
- Dynamic Catholic: Daily reflections

3. Living a Sacramental Life: Liturgy of the Eucharist

"They recognized him in the breaking of the bread." How can our life with Christ be sustained if we do not allow the grace of the Sacraments to change us? Remember, we are never alone, Christ still walks with us.

Ideas and Resources:

- Mentoring /Witness from your congregation
- Sacraments of Initiation
- Baptism: Young couple that has asked to have their child baptized
- Eucharist: A walk through the mass (video or in person)
- First communicants make cards for newly baptized children
- Confirmation candidates write letters/cards to the First Communicants
- The community of parishioners writes notes to the Confirmation Candidates (especially those having a child baptized)
- Confirmation: Have a few teens give 'witness talks' as to why they chose Confirmation, maybe an adult who chose Confirmation later in life.
- The Eucharist (Word on Fire by Robert Barron)
- Focus on Forgiveness through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. During Lent this can be done through a workshop or retreat.



4. Going out to Live the Mission of the Gospel and spread the Good News that Jesus has given us: Service

We want to be Christ like and through works of charity, service, and our life of prayer, we will be Christ centered and go out to serve the World. How do we serve others as Christ served us?

Ideas and Resources:

- Remember we are people of service because of our Baptismal call, it is who we are, not what we do. Keeping this in the forefront, almost everything we do is service to others.
- Service does not need to be a grand gesture, it can be as simple as picking up a piece of trash blowing across the parking lot or as complex as you would like.
- Service does not have an age, we just need to give them a voice and support, Advocate for them.
Little Red Wagon Foundation: created in 2005 by a 7 year old boy Zach Bonner
Free the Children: created in 1995 by Craig Kielburger
- The best resource is your community, talk with them, listen then take action.

Faith Witness/Storytelling Strategies

St. Joseph, Stuyvesant Falls (Lisanne Jensen)

Guest speaker examples: I had a mother and daughter come in and talk about the Rosary and help young people create their own rosary beads. At St. James, I'd planned to have Marni Gillard come in to talk about faith through storytelling, but it unfortunately never happened. At St. James, I've had Br. Ed Boyer from St. Joseph's Spiritual Life Center in Valatie talk about St. Joseph. At St. Joseph's, I had a "ministry fair" where ministry leaders from the parish came into the faith formation classrooms to talk with young people about their ministries, what's involved, and what they enjoy most. I had planned to have our resident seminarian come in and talk with young people about his faith growing up, his discernment to the priesthood, etc.)

St. Kateri Tekakwitha, Schenectady (Lisa Kuban)

Using Faith Witness Movies: (for in person or at home lessons): Assign a movie that can be viewed on YouTube, Netflix or other movie service (important to make sure that all have access or have DVD copies to make available). Then assign a few questions that will be used for online discussion in Zoom or Google Meets. Priming the pump will allow for a more fruitful discussion. For example: Under advocacy/social justice: "Dorothy Day - Don't Call Me Saint" or for Pastoral Care or Saints: "Molokai - Story of Father Damian or Service: TED talk by Father Greg Boyle on his work in East LA.

For older youth, create small teams, and have these teams watch different videos and present them to group. If using Zoom, give permission to share screen for brief power points. For in person sessions, one video could be used and each group can be given one element of the subject to present: poster presentations or skit. Online videos can be shared with parents to continue at home discussions.

Appendix B

Catechetical Publishers & Other Resources

While not exhaustive, the following list represents the catechetical/youth ministry publishers and other resources most commonly used by parishes in the Diocese of Albany. Many of the publishers have created new materials, or adapted current materials, that can be used in hybrid or totally virtual models. In addition, as was done in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, publishers may still be willing to allow free access to some online components even for parishes not using their materials. The representatives listed can provide the most up-to-date information.

Vibrant Faith/Vibrant Faith Catalyst

www.vibrantfaith.org

Click on “Join Catalyst” to become part of the network.

Vibrant Faith serves a variety of Christian churches, including Catholic parishes, by helping them to re-create faith formation for families, faith communities, and people of all ages. Vibrant Faith Catalyst is a network of leaders committed to this vision of lifelong faith formation. You will find webinars, helpful toolkits, courses, as well as an exchange of insights and ideas from other leaders. Excellent resources for developing hybrid/virtual programming.

RCL Benziger

www.rclbenziger.com

Blest Are We: Faith & Word Edition

(www.blestarewe.com)

Also includes editions for Grades 7/8

Be My Disciples (www.bemydisciples.com) Grades 1-8

Pre-school programs available: ***Stories of God’s Love*** (ages 3-5)

Regional Representative:

Linda Beckwith

Direct: 513-368-5104

Toll-free: 1-877-275-4725

Email: lbeckwith@rclbenziger.com

Our Sunday Visitor Curriculum Division

www.osv.com

Alive in Christ (www.aliveinchrist.osv.com) Grades 1-6

Call to Faith (K-6)

Call to Faith Junior High

Single volumes (7 and 8)

Thematic (mini-course) editions

Pre-school programs available: ***Allelu!*** (3/4, 5); ***I Am Special*** (3-5)

Regional Representative:

Robin A. Kennovin

Toll free: 1-877-731-5003

rkennovin@osv.com

Pflaum Publishing

www.pflaum.com

Pflaum Gospel Weeklies Faith Formation Program (K-8)

Regional Representative:

David Barocsi

Direct: 315-794-4928

DBarocsi@pflaum.com

W. H. Sadlier Co., Inc.

www.webelieveweb.com

We Believe – Catholic Identity – 4th ed. (K-6)

Also includes editions for Grades 7/8 – ***We Live our Faith***

Faith and Witness – Grade 7/8 one-semester thematic editions

Pre-school program available: ***Discovering God*** (3-5)

Regional Representative:

Laurel Marchesini

Direct: 201-966-8625

lmarchesini@sadlier.com

Loyola Press

www.loyolapress.com

www.findinggod.org

Finding God: Our response to God's gifts (1-8) – 2013 ed.

Christ our Life: New Evangelization Edition - 2016

Pre-school program available: ***God Made Everything***

Educational Consultant:

Michele Baudek

baudek@loyolapress.com

1-800-256-0589 x523

St. Mary's Press

www.smp.org

Discover! Finding Faith in Life (K-5)

Catholic Connections (Gr. 6-8)

Total Catechesis (Gr. 9+)

Sales Consultant:

Dennis Kurtz

dkurtz@smp.org

1-866-457-7922

Ascension Press

www.ascensionpress.com

Offers a variety of resources for children, youth, and adults.

Dynamic Catholic

www.dynamiccatholic.com

Offers a variety of resources for families, children, youth, and adults.

National Federation for Catholic

Youth Ministry

www.nfcym.org

NFCYM is the leading national organization for ministry with younger and older adolescents. It offers a variety of its own resources and serves as a clearinghouse for other resources.

Center for Ministry Development/Youth

Ministry Access

www.cmdnet.org

Offers excellent resources on ministry with families as well as ministry with younger and older adolescents.

Committee Members

Parish Catechetical/Youth Ministry Leaders:

[Maureen Billa](#), St. Mary's, Clinton Heights

[Bob Desrosiers](#), St. Mary's, Coxsackie

[Jim Gorman](#), St. Michael the Archangel, South Glens Falls

[Christine Goss](#), Immaculate Conception, Glenville: ICGlenvi@rcda.org

[Lisanne Jensen](#), Christ the King, Westmere (previously St. James, Chatham & St. Joseph, Stottville & Stuyvesant Falls)

[Lisa Kuban](#), St. Kateri Tekakwitha, Niskayuna

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*COME HOLY SPIRIT
fill the hearts of your faithful
and kindle in them the*

FIRE OF YOUR LOVE

Send forth your Spirit and they shall

BE CREATED

*And you shall renew the face of the
earth.*