

Established 8 December 1944

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Dear parents/guardians of our children, teens and youth:

"For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes." – 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

*"For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures;
that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures;
that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve." 1 Corinthians 15:3-4*

Our faith in Jesus Christ, the faith we share with each other, the faith we share with Saint Paul who, by his own admission, was the "least" among the apostles, and the faith we share with countless witnesses throughout the centuries, **continues** to be a faith that is handed on . . . by the grace of God through the witness and living of so many, and yes, by instruction. Still, the instruction, or learning of beliefs and facts is empty without it being lived and modeled by us, especially for the benefit of our children, teens and youth.

Know that you, **the first and primary teachers of your children**, continue to be in prayer by me and the Pastoral Staff and others, daily. You have always mattered and, I am sure, been heroes in the eyes and minds of your children, but since March of this year, you, and so many, have been tested and become even greater heroes. **Thank you for all you do for your children and family.**

As you know, near the end of June each family, having children who would be in grades K-11 this school year, was emailed information and a Survey link we were offering that would aid us in planning and preparing for the coming Parish School of Religion/Lifeteen/Sacramental Preparation and Formation year. The Survey was emailed to approximately 140 households, and **36** households completed the Survey. Again, we are grateful for this and appreciated not only the responses but the comments as well.

We also surveyed our Catechists and Aides and all who have given so generously of their time and talent this past year to help “hand on” a lived faith to those you have entrusted us with to obtain their input for the coming year as well.

Since June of this year, and even before, we have continued to consider how best to carry out the important ministry of “handing on” the faith in the current Pandemic world we live in. We have been attentive to and responsive to what national, state and local Health Departments have shared regarding guidelines and protocols, as well as what the Ohio Conference of Catholic Bishops and our own Diocesan Administration have provided for guidelines and protocols. Additionally, we have followed closely the plans of the Tallmadge City Schools and been in contact on a variety of occasions with some of their leadership.

On May 25th, we were able to reopen our Church building for public worship thanks to the planning and hard work (that continues) of so many fellow parishioners. We have done this as safely as is possible under the circumstances. *The dispensation from the obligation to participate in Sunday Mass remains in place throughout our Diocese and the State of Ohio, but the obligation to “keep holy the Lord’s Day” remains as well. We continue to live stream on Facebook daily and weekend Masses, as well as Liturgy of the Word for Children, and Monday thru Friday evening Eucharistic Exposition, Adoration, Evening and Night Prayer, also uploading these to Vimeo and YouTube.*

We have **not** restarted Council, Commission, group in-person meetings, and have, for this year, **cancelled** the annual Parish Rummage Sale (October) as well as the Christmas Bazaar (November), along with other activities that would normally take place from now until December of this year based not only on the guidelines from the sources noted above, but the reality that the safety and well-being of those involved, as well as those in our community, needed to be the first priority in any public gathering where more than 10 individuals would be present. We will continue to monitor the activity of the Pandemic in our community and state, and, as guidelines and protocols are revised, respond accordingly.

It is our hope and intention to restart what we can when we can, safely, in a measured and deliberate way. The available space in our buildings that would permit, beyond public worship, group gatherings beyond 10 and that can be planned with appropriate physical distancing, all other protocols being in place, is limited, with Finnerty Hall being the best choice for such gatherings.

Which brings us to just what **Religious Education and Formation** will look like this coming year.

In the past, we have had use of (first) the former Tallmadge Middle School, and this past year, Tallmadge High School, for housing this ministry on Sundays. **We do not have access to Tallmadge School facilities this year (due to the Tallmadge Public Schools’ Health Protocols for this year), and we well understand this.**

The parish’s physical plant does not allow the safe space to hold regular, in-person Religious Education/Formation sessions for more than one grade at a time.

With the safety of the children, teens, youth, catechists, aids, families, as well as others beyond our community, being a primary consideration, and given our physical space limitations, we will be **offering Virtual Religious Education/Formation (PSR) starting in October through December of this year.** We will look for opportunities to **safely** offer some “in-person” experiences if, and when, possible. The overall Pandemic situation, again, will continue to be monitored, and, if revisions are able to be made safely to this plan, these will be considered, along with consideration for how we will offer Religious Education/Formation (PSR) from January, 2021 forward.

Sacramental formation/preparation (Confirmation, First Communion/Reconciliation), will be offered as in-person sessions throughout the coming year.

A **Schedule** for K-8 is included with this communication.

Additionally, a **Registration Form** is included/attached to the email you are receiving (and is a PDF **fillable** form, which can be done on your computer). Please note that a link to **Faith Direct** is provided on this form and will take you to the **Faith Direct** site where you can pay your fee(s) at the time of your registration, either as an ACH withdrawal from a checking or savings account, or via Credit Card. It is also **important** that you include a **current email address**, on the **Registration Form**. An **Emergency Medical Form**, (also, a PDF fillable form), and a **Parent/Guardian Consent Form: Virtual Catechesis**, (also, a PDF fillable form), are also included/attached to the email you are receiving, along with a **Schedule** for this coming year.

The completed forms can be saved by you on your computer and then emailed to: Linda Tilenni at ltilenni@ourladyofvictory.net).

To allow sufficient time to order and receive materials that will be needed for your child, teen, youth, the **deadline for submitting your Registration, Payment, Emergency Medical Form and Parent/Guardian Consent Form: Virtual Catechesis is FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4TH.**

The **virtual** sessions will be held **every other week**. At the conclusion of each **virtual** session, a **lesson** for the **following week** will be assigned for the child, teen, youth and family to be **completed based on their/your unique family schedule during that week**. **So, (1) week virtual; the following week, family at home.**

As shown on the attached schedule, the first **VIRTUAL** session for the Parish School of Religion (Grades K, 1 and 2) is **Tuesday, October 6th at 6:30 PM**. (Grades 3, 4 and 5) will be **Wednesday, October 7th at 6:30 PM**. (Grades 6, 7 and 8) will be **Thursday, October 8th at 6:30 PM**.

- **All sessions will be planned to be approximately 40 minute sessions**, allowing for your child, teen, youth to be done before **7:30 PM** on these nights.

- **All sessions, even though virtual, will have 2 VIRTUS cleared adults present during the session, as well as a member of the Pastoral Staff – Joanne Pasko, Linda Herold, or Fr. Mike – observing the individual session.** This is necessary for compliance with "The Protection of Children".
- **All sessions will be conducted from the Parish Center.**
- As our first choice of virtual media platforms, it is our intention to use **Google Classroom**, but **Zoom** and **Google Meets** are also possibilities.
- We are using the same religious publishers/texts used this past year ("*Blest Are We*" for K-5 and "*Christ Our Life*" for 6-8).
- For First Communion/Reconciliation, we will be using "Blessed" (Dynamic Catholic).
- **Each family will have access to on-line materials offered by the publishers** (RCL Benziger for "Blest Are We", and Loyola Press for "Christ Our Life"). *The on-line materials are abundant and diverse and will meet any need to help support the Religious Education/Formation of not only your child, teen, youth, but families as well. Access will be set up with these publishers, which is one of the reasons an accurate email address is necessary, as this will provide for sign-in credentials for these sites.*
- The weekend of September 19th/20th is **Catechetical Sunday**, the theme this year being, **"I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you."** **TENTATIVELY: We are planning for an outdoor Mass on Sunday, September 20th, 11:00 AM, to recognize our Catechists/Aides, bless them, our students and families.** We will confirm this in the coming weeks.
- On the **weekend of October 3rd/4th**, we are **TENTATIVELY** planning for an "in-person" pick-up of materials for the families, children, teens and youth. We will confirm this in the coming weeks.

I recognize this is a lengthy communication, but, in light of our inability to gather "in-person", there was a great deal to communicate.

The following will serve as an **FAQ** to provide some additional information.

Why the move to a weeknight for Religious Education/Formation and away from Sunday? It was necessary to be able to schedule all of the grades, but also to be able to gather the Catechists/Aides safely and provide oversight for all virtual sessions. A single day (Sunday, or any other day) would not allow for this. Additionally, it was a way to **return** Sunday as a family day (other than for some of the Sacramental Preparation/Formation Sessions and Lifeteen), and this is an attempt to do that, while picking a more convenient time during the week with a shorter time period for each virtual session. Additionally, our experience has shown that with Religious Education/Formation on a Sunday, this makes for a **long** time of "Church" (not that that is a bad thing), but, resulted in many families choosing either Religious Education/Formation or Mass/Worship, but not both.

It is important to reiterate that there is no replacement in our Catholic Faith for Mass, the celebration of and reception of Eucharist/Communion. That is the primary and superior way in which we directly encounter Jesus Christ, real and present in the Eucharist.

Why the rotation of (1) week virtual, and the other week "not"? The intention is to allow for a little bit more flexibility for families who we know have a great deal on their plates, that is, make it a bit more accessible to grow in their faith and as Disciples of the Lord Jesus. By (1) week of "at home based on your family schedule", we believe that provided greater flexibility given all of the other demands of family life.

Why such a late start? Now, Religious Education/Formation (PSR) will run beyond the date/time it has in the past? It is our intention to allow our families, children, teens and youth to acclimate to a unique school year without having to also acclimate to the important and necessary spiritual growth provided through Religious Education/Formation. The later start allows for this. It will also allow us sufficient time to train our Catechists and others in this "new" method of communicating the faith since the manner in which we are offering Religious Education/Formation this year is new to us and those who will be ministering as Catechists and Aides.

Can I simply homeschool my child/teen/youth? In effect, the **virtual** platform we have set-up is, in many ways, "homeschooling" for all of our children, teens and youth. While not what any of us would choose and certainly not perfect, we felt strongly that the element of all participating **virtually** was important and necessary to develop, maintain and sustain a relationship between our younger members and others

What about Lifeteen for the 9th and 10th grade members? We are in the process of working out a format/plan for that, and hope to provide information about that in the next few weeks with an eye toward beginning Lifeteen **virtual** sessions and experiences in October. **TENTATIVELY**, these will continue to take place on **Sundays**, beginning at **6:30 PM** and lasting an hour. Additionally, we are looking at creating smaller groups to gather **virtually**, which will allow for an even more personal and relational experience but also allow for a minimum of **2 VIRTUS cleared adults and at least one Pastoral Staff person to be present for the sessions. All sessions will be conducted from the Parish Center.**

Will there be any "in-person" gatherings for Lifeteen? We will consider the possibilities and if we can do that safely (keeping in mind that the current guideline for group gatherings aside from public worship/Mass remains at around 10 individuals), we will incorporate what we can. In the meantime, our passion is to engage our teens and youth in as meaningful a way as is possible at this time.

Why is there still a fee if we are not able to gather regularly in-person? The fee for Grades K-8 remains the same as this past year. It covered the majority of the costs of texts/materials, with the balance being subsidized from Parish Offertory. The fees for Lifeteen and Confirmation have been suspended for this year, as those fees were largely used to fund the gatherings and materials (and in the case of Confirmation, the Retreat expenses), with the balance being subsidized from Parish Offertory. With in-person gatherings being at, perhaps, a minimum for these groups this year, we chose to suspend the fee for this year only.

What about the Sacramental Preparation/Formation Calendar? When will we learn about those dates and other information?

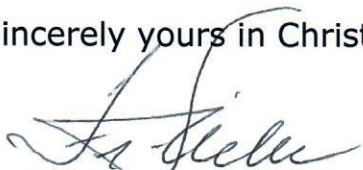
As shared early on, for the preparation/formation of our Candidates for Confirmation and the reception of First Communion/Reconciliation, there will be **Saturday (for First Communion/Reconciliation Candidates)**, and **Sunday Sessions (for Confirmation Candidates)** scheduled over the course of time from October through late Spring. The Sessions for **First Communion/Reconciliation** are included with the accompanying **Calendar**. We are in the process of looking at the Parish calendar so that we can plan and schedule the **Confirmation Preparation/Formation** dates/times, and will communicate that information as soon as we are able to finalize it.

We look forward to working with you to “hand on” what we have “received”: not only the treasures of our faith in Jesus Christ that sustains us, but the gift of that faith that makes us all beloved in the eyes and mind and heart of God.

Be assured that we will do all we can to support you and your children, teens and youth during these unprecedented and challenging times and firmly believe that in time, when we are all able to look back at these days, weeks and months, we will do so with the gratitude that God has brought us through this time and made us better than when we first began.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please, do not hesitate to contact any one of us. You can call the Parish Center Offices, stop in, or email us (see below).

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Reverend Michael A. Matusz,
Pastor



Linda Herold,
Pastoral Minister



Joanne Pasko
Catechetical Leader/Director
of Religious Education

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**REMEMBER: REGISTRATION/FEE DEADLINE –
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4TH**

**(all forms due in by that date. Email the completed forms to
Linda Tilenni – ltilenni@ourladyofvictory.net)**

Our Lady of Victory *Loving God. Loving Others. Making Disciples.*