



Office for Evangelization
and Catechetical Ministry

August 12, 2021

Dear Directors for Catechetical Ministry,

In anticipation of the start of the new catechetical year, we remain committed to keeping our parish catechetical ministries a safe place to gather as we resume in-person activities. Recognizing that the majority of parish faith formation programs took place remotely last year, we look forward to parishes providing students in-person instruction as much as possible. Following the updated guidance from the [California Department of Public Health](#) and in consultation with Bishop McElroy, you will find a list of precautionary measures for parishes to consider as they resume parish activities:

Facial Coverings:

Consistent with the guidance provided for Catholic Schools, faith formation programs will require all students including staff and volunteers to wear a mask in indoor settings regardless of their vaccination status. Masks are optional for outdoor settings. Exemptions are followed per [CDPH face mask guidance](#).

The following **individuals** are exempt from wearing masks at all times:

- Persons younger than two years old. Very young children must not wear a mask because of the risk of suffocation.
- Persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a mask. This includes persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a mask could obstruct breathing or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a mask without assistance.
- Persons who are hearing impaired, or communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.

Alternative faith formation modalities should be considered for students and families who are unable to participate in the in-person instruction either due to them not wearing a facial covering or other underlying conditions.

Symptom Screenings:

It is important to inform parents and families to closely monitor and screen their children for symptoms before arriving to the parish campus. Please refer to the attached Symptom and Exposure Check for guidance.

Testing Positive for COVID-19:

The following are the [CDPH Recommendations](#) for staying home when sick and getting tested:

- Follow the strategy for Staying Home when Sick and Getting Tested from the [CDC](#).
- Getting tested for COVID-19 when symptoms are [consistent with COVID-19](#) will help with rapid contact tracing and prevent possible spread.
- Advise staff members and students with symptoms of COVID-19 infection not to return for in-person instruction until they have met CDPH criteria to return onsite for those with symptoms:
 - At least 24 hours have passed since resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications; and
 - Other symptoms have improved; and
 - They have a negative test for SARS-CoV-2, OR a healthcare provider has provided documentation that the symptoms are typical of their underlying chronic condition (e.g., allergies or asthma) OR a healthcare provider has confirmed an alternative named diagnosis (e.g., Streptococcal pharyngitis, Coxsackie virus), OR at least 10 days have passed since symptom onset.

Additional rules for quarantine:

- Modified quarantine for students with close contact to COVID-19 at program: if both the exposed student and the person with COVID-19 were wearing face masks, the exposed student may continue to attend the faith formation program with testing.
- Students with outdoor exposures at program must quarantine only if the exposure happened while unmasked and seated, or during high-contact activities.
- Students in the same class or group as a positive COVID-19 case must quarantine only if they are known to have spent 15 minutes within 6 feet of the case.

For more information, please refer to [CDC Contact Tracing](#).

Classroom Considerations:

It is advisable to visibly display your safe reopening plans pertaining to faith formation programs. All health and safety precautionary measures should be communicated to parents, families and students and if possible, include this information on the parish website or send via Flocknote so families are aware in advance of the commencement of the catechetical year. Although social distancing is no longer a requirement for indoor meetings, so long as other prevention measures are in place such as the use of masks, it is important to keep the following:

- Create a sanitation plan, post signage that reinforces best practices and provide sanitation stations throughout the parish campus.
- Remind students about [coughing and sneezing etiquette](#).
- Optimize ventilation for indoor spaces and meetings.
- Classrooms, desks and spaces used should be sanitized after use. In general, cleaning once a day is usually enough to sufficiently remove potential viruses that may be on surfaces.

Disinfecting (using disinfectants on the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency COVID-19](#) list) removes any remaining germs on surfaces, which further mitigates the risk of spreading infection.

- Establish cohorts or small groups
- Establish a protocol for dropping off and picking up students.
- Determine a route where students will enter and exit the parish/school facilities.

Thank you for your perseverance and patience as we continue to navigate the effects of COVID-19 at the start of the new catechetical year. These precautionary measures will only assist us in mitigating any possibility of contagion as we once again resume our in-person activities. May the grace of Christ the healer accompany you always. Rest assured of my continued prayers for you.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "María Olivia Galván". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "María" being the most prominent.

María Olivia Galván
Chancellor and Director for Pastoral Ministries
Diocese of San Diego