

FAITH FORMATION PLANNING TOOL - Reflection Questions

The following are some reflection questions to assist as you begin the process of planning a return to in-person programming. They are presented within the broader context of the re-opening of parishes. Parish leaders will need to be intentional in managing change and accompanying parishioners during this ongoing time of transition throughout this coming year.

In what ways is the Sunday morning experience changing for most churchgoers as they return to Mass in person?

- What were some advantages for families in attending Mass via livestream?
- How will they need to adapt in order to once again attend Mass in person?
- How can you respond and accompany families during this transition back?

What intentional efforts are being made by the parish to welcome parishioners back to in person Mass and parish events?

How can you re-discover your parish community?

- In ways has it changed during the pandemic?
- How can you learn fresh their needs?

What intentional efforts are being made in order to reach out to faith formation families who have become disconnected from the parish during the pandemic?

In what ways do you anticipate, or are already experiencing, some dissension or resistance to the upcoming transition to in-person programming?

- How might you be able to address this in an intentional manner and help families to adapt?

What lessons have you learned from the new methods of faith formation (digital or other) effectively employed last year that you can integrate into your programming during the coming year?

- How can these new tools enhance the quality of catechesis?
- What will you do differently?

What should your stewardship look like as you return? Are there changes that need to be made regarding how your faith formation funds are used?

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In what ways do you need to rethink how you use your facilities?

- Who do you need to collaborate with in order to successfully share parish and/or school space?
- If your parish finds that Covid restrictions limits your use of certain spaces, how can your facilities be used with intentionality during this time? How can you prioritize the use of your gathering spaces? How can you use the spaces creatively?

What will your Faith Formation staff (including catechists and volunteers) look like this coming year?

- How will you accompany your staff during the transition back to in-person programming?
- What is your strategy for rebuilding your staff?
- Are the necessary skills for effective Faith Formation represented in your team?
- How can you broaden the skills of your team?
- What formation will be needed to successfully implement new modalities?

What changes would you make if you started with a blank Faith Formation calendar?

For further consideration:

The new Directory for Catechesis (2020) is inviting parishes to release their catechetical efforts from several chokeholds. The first of these is the “school model” of catechesis.¹ This bold statement prompts us to consider in what ways this model of catechesis is limiting our faith formation efforts. Although this pandemic has been difficult to navigate it has also provided a unique opportunity for parishes to think creatively about moving their catechetical programs in new directions. This will require both boldness and prudence. As you plan for a new and innovative catechetical program for the upcoming year, consider the following:

What new catechetical models are on the horizon?

- In what ways does the [Directory for Catechesis \(2020\)](https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/06/25/200625c.html) inspire and challenge you to move away from the “school model” of catechesis?
- Why does the church invite us to have a “sense of urgency” in seeking new modalities for catechesis?
- What may be holding your parish back from more fully embracing this invitation?
- What do you find exciting about the Church’s invitation to break free from the “school model” of catechesis?
- How can you be a part of exploring new catechetical models?
- How will your parish connect and relate to other parishes in order to begin to explore new models?

¹ <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/06/25/200625c.html>

FAITH FORMATION PLANNING TOOL - Program Structure

CONSIDER: What did your Faith Formation program look like before the pandemic? What limitations will the restrictions impose? Consider first the logistical aspects of your Faith Formation program as well as the sacrament preparation programs. If you have more than one program, you can use this sheet for each one. (e.g. traditional weekly, monthly family, middle school, etc.)

PRIOR TO PANDEMIC

Location(s) used:

- Is this space exclusively used by you?
- Is this shared space? With who?
- Who is responsible for the maintenance of this space?
- How will the space be cleaned and sanitized?
- Will there be additional costs incurred due to frequent cleaning and sanitation?

Number of people you would typically need to accommodate in the sessions: (Number of parents and children, for family programs.)

Staffing: Number of paid staff, catechists, support volunteers

Number of sessions:

Days of the week / Times of the session:

AFTER PANDEMIC

Will this location still be available to you?

Are there any potential limitations in using these spaces?

How frequently will you have access to these spaces?

Will any special arrangements be required in order to share the space?

Number of people you can accommodate in order to comply with restrictions: (Number of parents and children, for family programs.) Keep in mind that restrictions are lifting rapidly. It is difficult to predict conditions in September. It is best to have contingency plans.

Staffing: Number of paid staff, catechists, support volunteers, maintenance:

Number of sessions that may be possible:

Days of the week / Times of the session that may be possible.

If frequency of in-person sessions needs to be less than before the pandemic, how will catechesis be supplemented?

FAITH FORMATION PLANNING TOOL - Current Program Components

CONSIDER: What are the different components of your Faith Formation Program? Consider the various components that make up your Faith Formation program (these are not necessarily sessions, but rather the different aspects of your program. Some examples may include: catechetical sessions, service and justice events, prayer experiences / liturgies, seasonal assemblies, parent meetings, retreat experiences, guest presentations, off site events, etc.)

COMPONENT: One component of your program

OBJECTIVE: What is the objective of this component? Why is it a part of your program? Why do you do it?

PRIORITY: Is this an absolutely integral part of the program? Is this is important, but not integral? Is the value of this program component worth the resources that will be employed?

PRIOR TO COVID: How was this component carried out?

ADAPTATION DURING COVID: How was this adapted during Covid? (e.g. remained in person as worship experience, used digital platform, hybrid, etc.)

REIMAGINED POST-COVID: How will this component be implemented post-Covid? (e.g. in-person session, transform from “classroom” experience, retain digital component.)

EXAMPLE

COMPONENT	OBJECTIVE	PRIORITY	PRIOR TO COVID	COVID ADAPTATION	REIMAGINED POST COVID
Informational parent meeting presentations (Spring / fall / January)	To inform the parents and candidates what the objectives of the program are, etc.	MUST KEEP	All in person, weekday evenings	Conducted informational parts of parent meeting via Zoom webinar. Allow for Q&A. Record and make available.	Will continue to conduct via Zoom due to increased attendance in 2020. Will record and make available.
Fall parent meeting—Prayer service	To help the candidates and the parents recall their baptism & pray together	KEEP IF POSSIBLE	In person, children w/ parents together	Was done at home and facilitated via Zoom if necessary.	Will be done in person and will include pick-up of materials. Session is shorter since info. via Zoom
January parent meeting - Presenter/ Adoration—Prayer time	Evangelization—Also to help parents experience some prayer time	MUST KEEP	In person, in church.	Was done in person. Was held earlier in the year to prevent cancellation.	Will be done in person in Church. Will include materials pick up. Will be done at usual time of year.
Family Conferences	To meet family personally, to understand the family situation, for family Q & A.	KEEP IF POSSIBLE	Done in person, weekday evenings.	Was conducted via Zoom with individual families.	Will offer families option of in-person or Zoom interview.
Kick-Off Retreat	To build enthusiasm for the program	KEEP IF POSSIBLE	All in-person	Was done virtually. Mass was in person.	Will be done in person and will record specific parts of the retreat for those unable to attend due to illness.
Confirmation Mass before sessions	Opportunity to target Conf. candidates at Mass. Liturgical catechesis	KEEP IF POSSIBLE	All in-person	Was offered in person with option to attend. Masses were livestreamed.	Masses will be offered and attendance will be required and expected by candidate & parents. Will be livestreamed for special needs & illness.
Confirmation Sessions	Catechesis related to the sacrament	MUST KEEP	All in-person	All sessions were done via Zoom.	Will be done in person. Google classroom will be used to provide supplemental video & reflection/journal submissions.
Spring Confirmation Retreat	Fun, Intimate and intense time for candidates to grow in faith/prayer	MUST KEEP	All in-person w/overnight option	No overnight experience. Only one day. Zoom during the morning. Evening in church for worship.	Retreat will be in person, include additional digital resources. No overnight option in 2021. Plan for 2022.
Digital Service Project	To experience serving/discipleship	MUST KEEP	All in-person	Provided online and at home options, many agencies were still in need.	Continue to provide both online and at home options, many agencies are still in need.

