

The Catechetical Office of the Archdiocese of Newark, which supports all parishes in Bergen, Essex, Hudson and Union counties, has updated the Guidelines for Parish Catechetical Programs during the Covid-19 Pandemic for the 2021-2022 Catechetical Year. It is our hope that these guidelines are helpful to our parishes as they work to provide fruitful and safe catechetical programming which help our families to grow in deeper relationship with Jesus Christ.

Parishes are encouraged to offer some form of in-person Faith Formation this year. We continue to feel the impact of Covid-19 on parish life and the situation is further complicated by the recent emergence of the Delta variant. Therefore, a great deal of collaboration, flexibility, and adaptability will be required in order to carry out catechetical ministry safely and effectively at our parishes.

Our guidelines are in full compliance with all public health mandates including:

- **Face coverings:** Governor Murphy signed [Executive Order No. 251](#) on August 6, 2021, making mask-wearing mandatory indoors for staff, students, and visitors in schools. The Archdiocese will adapt the same mask-wearing protocols for catechetical programming. This will remain in effect until such time as the Governor rescinds the order and the Archdiocese gives further direction regarding mask-wearing in schools.
- **Cleaning and Sanitizing:** All parishes are to ensure that any spaces that are used for catechetical sessions are properly cleaned and sanitized in between cohorts and after use. Appropriate professional help should be obtained to carry out necessary sanitizing procedures.
- **Safety Practices:** Parish Catechetical Leaders (PCLs) will implement safety practices including social distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and proper quarantining in alignment with CDC guidelines and recommendations.
- **Health Screening:** Parents and caregivers are strongly encouraged to monitor their children for signs of illness prior to attending faith formation sessions, and parishes will implement health screening and/or use self-reporting tools. All PCLs, catechists, and children of our faith formation programs should remain at home if ill, if exposed to an infected person, or if experiencing symptoms of illness.
- **Communication with local authorities:** PCLs have been instructed to be in communication with their local Board of Health, local school district, and Catholic school for updates, guidance, and safety protocols that must be adhered to in their community.

We are grateful to our pastors and PCLs who are working diligently to provide vibrant, and safe, catechetical programs for their families.

The Archdiocese of Newark's Catechetical Office will continue to monitor the ongoing pandemic and related circumstances and will amend safety practices as required based upon evolving state and federal guidance. We continue to pray for those affected by COVID-19 and for an end to this pandemic.

To learn more about the Catechetical Office, visit <https://rcanfaithformation.org/>.