

Plan for Administration of Catechesis and Sacramental Preparation During COVID in the Diocese of Grand Falls

Executive Summary

With the onset of the COVID Pandemic, we are presented with a new set of challenges in how to conduct Catechesis and Sacramental Preparation in the Diocese of Grand Falls. The intent of this plan is to provide options and potential solutions to assist Parishes in overcoming these challenges.

We recognize that all Parishes do not face the same challenges. We, therefore, will attempt to provide a plan that can be adapted for use in the various Parishes. For example, there are a multitude of online tools that can be utilized to assist ongoing Catechesis. For some, the Google Suite of Tools would be most advantageous due to teacher and student familiarity through its usage in the School system. For others, the Zoom Meeting tool will be advantageous to gather with families to provide catechetical instruction. Another option would be to upload lessons on YouTube. With this option, lessons can be uploaded, and families can view them and perform the activities at their convenience.

We further recognize that in certain instances it will be necessary for face-to-face meetings between catechists and/or parish priest, and parents/students to take place (ex. Preparation for and the celebration of Sacraments). These instances should be considered the exception, rather than the rule. When it is deemed absolutely necessary to conduct a face-to-face meeting, all Federal, Provincial and Diocesan guidelines need to be observed and a plan for doing so will be

submitted to the Diocese through the Office of Catechetics for approval before any meeting takes place.

IN PREPARATION:

Each Parish must provide a contact person to the office of Catechetics to be liaison within the parish and between the Parish and Diocese.

The Office of Catechetics must be notified about every in-person gathering between Parish personnel and young people.

Each parish must be proactive in providing assistance to our young people regarding Catechetics. This will include making materials available, assisting with these materials financially if needed, opting to allow children to join with another parish if catechists cannot be found in a parish ... In other words, The provision for Catechetics in each parish must be of paramount importance.

Online Learning

As noted, there are several tools available for online learning. Our intent is not to provide a one size fits all solution. Rather, we leave it to the discretion of the Parish to determine which tools work best for them for the conduct of Catechesis either totally or partially online. This provides the necessary flexibility to tailor the program to the needs of the Parish. It is not necessary to choose one tool at the exclusion of the others. Rather, we recommend using a combination of the online tools mentioned or others that collectively meet the needs of the community. We also will be providing online content that will be available for use by all Parishes in case they prefer that method of delivery instead of developing their own (See Appendix A – Online Content). Whichever method the Parish chooses, a written plan must be submitted to the Diocese detailing how that Parish will deliver

Catechesis. Once the plan is approved, Catechesis may continue. It is hoped this parish plan will be submitted to the diocese by the end of November. The plan should be submitted to ocybrian@gmail.com

The role of the catechist in online learning is to be the parish contact person for the parents and students and the Diocese. Catechists are still necessary even if the parish chooses to go with a model that is almost entirely online. The parish catechist(s) will conduct outreach via phone, email, text, Facebook or any of the meeting tools outlined above. If any homework is assigned, the parish catechist will receive that work and respond to it. They will ensure that students have their textbooks or other materials necessary to complete the course work at home. In most cases this will require making photocopies of any assigned worksheets and ensuring they are available for the students to pick up in Church or at the parish office – not every home has a printer.

Face-to-face Meetings

We understand that it is impossible to administer Sacraments solely through use of online tools. For the occasions when face-to-face meetings are deemed necessary, it is necessary that a plan be developed by the Parish and submitted to the Diocese for approval prior to any face-to-face Catechesis, Sacramental Preparation or Celebration of Sacraments taking place. The plan should include detailed descriptions of how the Parish will adhere to Federal, Provincial and Diocesan guidelines for in person meetings. No face-to-face meetings are to take place without an approved plan in place.

Conclusion

Our intent is to assist the Parishes in moving forward with our Catechetical Programs during these difficult times. We hope that the

methods outlined in this plan will provide the necessary guidance and help facilitate the need to adjust our methodology to meet the needs of our respective communities in teaching our Faith, while maintaining a safe environment for all involved.

Appendix A - Online Content Proposal

Grades 1 to 6 – Finding God

The approved program for use in Grades 1 to 6 in the Diocese is the Finding God Program from Loyola Press. While this program is in wide use throughout the Diocese of Grand Falls, we recognize that it is not being used everywhere. In some parishes, Sacramental Preparation using pre-existing tools, is the only catechesis offered. This pandemic has forced us to look at how to offer the same content to children throughout the Diocese, even those parishes without sufficient numbers of catechists in place.

Sacramental preparation must be understood as the bare minimum when it comes to Catechesis of children in the Roman Catholic Faith.

The Diocese of Grand Falls has already established its own YouTube Channel and Facebook Page. Facebook offers the ability to create groups. These groups can be private or joined by invitation or request. This could be used to create spaces where Diocesan Catechists can share information with each other. With a little creativity, it will be possible to upload pre-recorded lessons to the Diocese YouTube Channel. These lessons would be visible to all who visit the Diocese YouTube Channel. The advantage of YouTube is that in communities of the Diocese with less than reliable internet service, video replay quality can be chosen (Standard Definition, SD versus High Definition, HD) and video can be paused to allow the buffer to fill before the video is watched. This makes it much more likely that the lesson can be completed and does not rely on maintaining a good connection to GoogleMeet or Zoom.

Creating the Content:

1. Identify the key lessons that must be taught in the various grade levels. We suggest that priority be given to Grade 2 as that is the sacramental preparation year.
2. Identify catechists of the Diocese with the ability to record and edit video of lessons identified in 1. (Alternately, if there are catechists willing to be recorded teaching a lesson, but lack the necessary audio and video equipment, identifies a person(s) who is willing to travel (or have the catechists travel to them) and capture the lessons, edit the video and upload to the Diocese YouTube Channel.)
3. If a single person will be recording and editing the online content for our Finding God program, that person should be remunerated by the Diocese for their time and efforts as this will be no small undertaking.
4. Any lessons we did not create this academic year should be completed in the summer/fall 2021 so as to round out the lessons available. This is an invaluable resource going forward, whether or not we have limitations on gatherings.
5. The Finding God program offers much in the way of online suggestions for working with children. The resources are incredible.

Confirmation Preparation

In Grades 7-9 or Confirmation Preparation, the resource for use in the Diocese of Grand Falls is Decision Point. The beauty of this program is that it is already ALL online. Students can watch the videos, download the workbook and complete the program using the materials already online. The role of the catechist would be to facilitate the due dates for the lesson materials. Since this program focuses heavily on conversation, small group Zoom/Google Meet/Microsoft Teams calls, would be ideal in this context. These three programs give the host (and

user) the ability to share their screens thus, allowing for the videos to be viewed simultaneously. Alternately, where this may strain precarious internet connections, students can view videos prior to online meetings.

Please remember:

1. Provide the Diocese with the contact person for the Parish before the end of November;
2. No in person meetings with children are allowed without permission;
3. Using this approach, children can be catechized at a distance by joining with another parish if their own parish lacks resources.
4. There are many online resources available. They are there to be used.