

# Office of Catechesis Newsletter - March 19, 2021

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To: Jennifer Murphy <MurphyJC@archmil.org>



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## Message from Gary

### The Catholic Comeback – Looking Ahead

### New Catholic Comeback Matrix

Here are a few notes about the updated [Catholic Comeback Matrix](#) published in February. First, remember this is called the Catholic Comeback. The goal is for us to come back, to reopen, to re-engage. Any restrictions in the matrix are intended to ensure a SAFE comeback. By operating safely, we hope to avoid setbacks and to continue toward greater openness and more effective ministry in the long run.

Second, with this revision, you may notice there are no phases delineated. In an early time, the phased approach was helpful. We could see progress from Safer-at-Home to Phase 1 (tentative steps to reopen with gatherings of less than 10) to Phase 2 (carrying on ministry with safety protocols). But now, the phases are no longer seen as necessary. Instead, there is a simple list of current guidelines.

Finally, regarding “less than 50.” For Religious Education and some other activities, the matrix says “less than 50 in attendance.” This does not mean there must be less than 50 in the program or in the building. It is referring to a limit of 50 for a particular space, e.g., a classroom or gathering area. So, your program is not limited to 50 total. But any given meeting area should not have more than 50 (with social distancing, of course).

Note that there are also special [Guidelines for Holy Week and the Triduum](#). If you prepare catechumens or candidates for reception, or if you teach about Holy Week, make sure you are familiar with the adaptations this year.

### **Looking Ahead through Spring to Summer**

As the program year continues, I suggest maintaining the same precautions and practices you have used thus far. Even with some people receiving the vaccine, it makes sense to remain consistent with social distancing and masks, or with virtual meetings, for your remaining sessions this spring.

If you are planning summer programs for children, such as VBS, use the Catholic Comeback matrix as a guide, and pay attention to public health recommendations. If you anticipate large numbers, arrange smaller groupings that can meet in separate spaces. (See the clarification of “less than 50” above.) If you will be using your church for prayer, then follow the seating arrangement and protocols for Mass. Consider holding parts of the program outdoors. You may need to replace certain games or activities with alternatives that work well with social distancing. Summer is likely to be a transition time. As larger numbers of people will have been vaccinated, some restrictions may be eased in our communities. It is difficult to predict just how quickly this will happen, or how quickly our parishioners will become comfortable with changes. So summer may have an in-between feel – no longer feeling like the past year, but not yet feeling “normal.”

### **Preparing for Fall**

In planning for next year, our aim should be to offer in-person formation to the extent possible. But we know that each parish is different in terms of meeting space, enrollment numbers, schedules, and other factors. So it is difficult to generalize about what will be workable. Here are a few thoughts:

- Make plans for in-person faith formation, if at all possible. Reserve space, prepare volunteers, and purchase materials you will need.
- Like last year, have a Plan B. Be prepared to “pivot” if conditions regress.
- Be ready for continued precautions. Sanitizing, use of masks, and safe seating arrangements may remain with us for some time.
- If helpful, plan semesters. Develop a reliable plan for the first half year, but remain flexible about the second half, until you have more information and clarity. Then refine your plan for second semester.
- If your parish has a school and you use common spaces, begin preparing now for a successful return to or continuation of in-person instruction.
- Seek input from your catechists and coworkers, listen to parents, learn from the young people, and pray for the Lord’s guidance.

### **Learning from the Pandemic**

There may be things you did this year that you will want to bring into the future. For example, you may have discovered that working with smaller groups was fruitful - incorporate small group dynamics next year. You may have found that parents were able to take a greater role - plan parent involvement next year. You may have discovered that virtual gatherings can be fun and engaging - plan occasional virtual events. You may have learned that families were happy to watch a video together or that kids would do an activity on their own - consider a flipped classroom approach from time to time. Let this past year be a source of learning and wisdom for the future.

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## **Office of Catechesis News**

### **Submit Current 4th through 7th Grade Student Information by March 31, 2021**

The Catholic high schools around the Archdiocese of Milwaukee offer a variety of opportunities for 4th through 7th grade students – summer camps, open houses, shadow days and more. So each year, the archdiocesan Office for Schools collects contact information for current students in those grades. We do not want students in parish religious education programs to be excluded from these opportunities. So we are asking parish programs to submit current information.

For many parishes, this has been a routine practice. For some, this is new. We recently heard from a couple of catechetical leaders reluctant to send the information this first time until their parents are informed. One of them plans to revise her registration form for next year to indicate

how contact information may be used. That is a good practice. For our part, we in the archdiocesan offices have probably not done enough in recent years to explain this or to prepare you for this request. I apologize. If you feel your parish is not able to submit information at this time, please email me to let me know ([pokornyg@archmil.org](mailto:pokornyg@archmil.org)).

For all who are submitting information this month, many thanks.

~Gary Pokorny

### **Instructions:**

Student information can be directly emailed to Janelle Luther at [lutherj@archmil.org](mailto:lutherj@archmil.org) in an Excel or CSV format. Please note: we need the field columns that you submit to be **in this EXACT format, with one column for each piece of 4th-7th grade student data:**

1. Last name
2. First name
3. Address
4. City
5. State
6. Zip
7. Gender (ONLY use the label boy or girl)
8. Grade level
9. Parish name
10. City of parish

If your religious education program maintains student data in a Parish Management System such as ParishSoft, PDS, Realm, Gabriel, etc., please export the data, format it as requested above, and email the Excel or CSV file to [lutherj@archmil.org](mailto:lutherj@archmil.org).

If you keep track of your students in an Excel spreadsheet or Google Doc, please make sure it is formatted as requested above and email the Excel or CSV file to [lutherj@archmil.org](mailto:lutherj@archmil.org).

Thank you. We greatly appreciated your assistance to collect this data.

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## **Retiring DREs & YMs Information Request**

As the formation year comes to close, we know that some DREs & YMs will be retiring. We would like to collect the names of those retiring so that we may acknowledge them and their accomplishments. If you or someone you know is retiring, please email [Jennifer Murphy](#) with

their name, current parish, current position and total years of service in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

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## Holy Habits Challenge

If you have been using the Holy Habits materials during the pandemic, we would like to know. Please inform us using this simple [form](#). Feel free to include any comments about your experience.

If you are not yet familiar with the Holy Habits Challenge, the materials and instructions are available, free-of-charge, on our [Holy Habits webpage](#). The Holy Habits Challenge is a wonderful means of introducing families to some of the basic Catholic habits that come to us from the traditions and piety of the Church. All the materials are free to download and print for use in your parish.

## Archdiocese News

### The Gift of Sunday

Recently, Archbishop ListECKI released [The Gift of Sunday](#), a foundational document for a three-year plan to reenergize our local Church, along with a [study guide](#).

Archbishop ListECKI commissioned the creation of the booklet, [Living the Gift of Sunday](#), which contains 10 weeks of reflections on how Sunday is a great gift for us, and how we might live that gift out in our everyday lives. It is his hope is that these books will be **distributed by every parish to all those who attend the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday Masses**.

For more information, visit the [Gift of Sunday webpage](#) or to order booklets visit the [Order Page](#).

The Sunday Mass Initiative will continue long beyond this Lent-Easter season. In the future as the initiative unfolds, we will point you to catechetical resources to use with children and families.

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### New Process for Reporting Grade Level Safe Environment Lesson Verification

The Safe Environment Office recently sent out updates which included the New Process for Reporting Grade Level Safe Environment Lesson Verification. This year we will be changing the process for parishes and schools to report their Safe Environment Grade Level Curriculum lessons

for their religious education programs and schools. In the past, parish religious education programs completed the safe environment lesson verification online via survey monkey.

Beginning with this current year, we are requiring Safe Environment Coordinators in parishes and schools to enter their safe environment lesson documentation directly into CMG Connect under *Children Data*. This is able to be done as the annual safe environment lessons are completed and will assist with having the information entered both with what lesson was taught and the number of children receiving training, opting out, or absent. This information should be entered in for each grade level in a religious education program or school for Safe Environment lessons taught between July 1, 2020 through July 1, 2021.

For more information on the New Process for Reporting Grade Level Safe Environment Lesson Verification as well as Annual Safe Environment Week Resource Guide, please [Safe Environment Office Email](#) for more information regarding both topics.

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## **Year of St. Joseph Prayer Cards**

Archbishop ListECKi has commissioned the design of a prayer card for the Year of St. Joseph. He desires that all parishes within the Archdiocese of Milwaukee distribute the prayer card to encourage parishioners to pray to St. Joseph. There is a plenary indulgence for praying to St. Joseph during this year, which is explained in part on the card. Additional prayer and study resources about St. Joseph may be found at [archmil.org/St-Joseph](http://archmil.org/St-Joseph). Each parish received a box with 250 cards in it. [Additional Cards](#) can be ordered at no cost.

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## **2022 Confirmation Dates**

Submit your **2022 Confirmation** date request!

It is time for parishes to submit date requests for high school **Confirmation for 2022**. Only by exception is youth Confirmation celebrated without a bishop.

Please use this link: <https://archmil.regfox.com/2022-youth-confirmation> to submit your request **no later than March 31, 2021**. For more information, please see the [original email](#) sent out on February 1st.

## **From Our Friends**

## InterGenerate & Children's Spirituality Conference Online

You are invited to attend a special online experience that brings together InterGenerate Conference with the Children's Spirituality Summit. The Conference will be held May 24-26, 2021. The conference is Online via Zoom and will feature keynote address, workshops, paper presentations, taste & see experiences, kindred group discussion and more. For more information and to register, visit: [InterGenerate Conference Website](#) or the [Children's Spirituality Summit Website](#).

### Resources

#### **The Catholic Comeback - Updated Matrix**

The newest version of the Catholic Comeback Matrix (version 7) is now available online at [archmil.org/COVID-19](http://archmil.org/COVID-19). Please reference this version of the matrix for all parish and school operations going forward.

On the same page, you will find: Holy Week & Triduum Guidelines and videos for the safe Veneration of the Cross.

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#### **Cyber Threats to Remote Learning**

During the pandemic, many schools and religious education programs switched to using online instruction. Even when parishes, schools and instructors take precautions, there are people out there who seek to disrupt or take advantage of the situation. Our Safe Environment Office offers two resources to alert parents, caregivers, and educators of the particular risks of online learning:

- For Parents and Caregivers - [Public Service Announcement by the FBI](#)
- For Educators - [Cyber Threats to K-12 Remote Learning](#)

Please feel free to share with parents, catechists and others.

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#### **Resources to Prepare for Lent**

##### **LENT Webpage**

Our [Lent webpage](#) offers links to catechetical resources to help you observe and teach the season. Resources include classroom and home activities, brief videos, Lenten practices, catechesis on the

sacrament of Reconciliation, Stations of the Cross, and more.

### **CRS Rice Bowl**

CRS Rice Bowl is Catholic Relief Services' Lenten solidarity program that brings Lent to life!

Through the Rice Bowl, we reach out to assist our brothers and sisters around the world through traditional Lenten practices, while we learn about the global issues affecting our neighbors overseas, as well as here in the United States. For more information, visit the [CRS Rice Bowl page](#) of the Archdiocese.

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### **Formation Resources**

Discover free-of-charge resources to supplement or enhance your lessons. Videos, lesson plans and other resources have been vetted by our review team, and are listed by general topic and by age group. Visit: <https://www.archmil.org/Catechesis/Technology/Formation-Resources.htm>

Do you have a favorite resource to share? Send us your suggestions under "Submit a Resource."

## **Job Openings**

**Director of Catholic Formation** - Lumen Christi, Mequon

**Religious Education Coordinator** - St. Lawrence, Hartford

**Director of Religious Education** - St. Francis de Sales, Lake Geneva

**Bilingual Director of Religious Education** - St. John Paul II, Milwaukee

## **Contact Us**

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**This ministry is supported by the Catholic Stewardship Appeal.**



*Do you have an article, event or district meeting you would like included in the newsletter???*

*Please send information to: [murphyjc@archmil.org](mailto:murphyjc@archmil.org)*

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