
FALL 2020

ST. GERTRUDE
PARISH
RELIGIOUS
EDUCATION
REOPENING PLAN

FAMILY FAITH
&
CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD
SHEPHERD

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stgertrude.org/religiouseducation



CONTENTS

A WORD FROM OUR TEAM	1
GUIDING PRINCIPLES	2
FORMATION PLAN	
FAMILY FAITH	3
CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD	4
PREFERENCE FORM	5
SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION	6
HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES	7-9

A Word From Our Team

Dear Parents,

The last six months have been unquestionably confusing and difficult. Our lives have been deeply impacted by the pandemic. Our faith community has also been impacted. We are unable to gather together as we once did and it appears as if this will be the case as we enter into the autumn months.

The reality of COVID-19 limits our typical religious education model in a number of ways. Our deep concern for the safety of the children and families (who come to us from many communities and school districts), our desire to ensure an environment conducive to Christian formation, and our need to be responsible stewards of financial resources preclude our ability to offer in person, classroom-based religious education as we have in the past.

In recent weeks, our team has joined together in prayer and fasting -- seeking together the will of God for religious education at St. Gertrude this year. We believe that, over the last several months, God seems to be giving families an opportunity for a "reset" of sorts. While much of life seems to be marked by distance and isolation, for families the experience has been just the opposite. For some families, this coming together has been refreshing, while for others it has been challenging. Therefore, despite the obvious challenges, we are as convicted as ever that the Gospel be proclaimed in this space that God has opened up -- in the midst of the whole family.

Given the circumstances, we will need to maximize religious education offerings this year, limited as they are, and strengthen our community by bringing whole families (i.e. parents and children) together for a common formation experience. In the past, our program did not offer parents the opportunity to be a part of the religious education of their child, but this year, we have a unique opportunity to diligently and safely engage in this task together -- with simplified programming, a low time commitment, and more opportunities for parents to directly engage their children with regard to the faith. This document attempts to outline a path that will bless families in these uncertain times, and in a way that bears in mind the physical, emotional, and spiritual health and well-being of all.

In Christ,
Bryan, Cindy, Kristen, Michelle, Brad and Megan

Contact Us: yassistant@stgertrude.org

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- The health, safety, and well-being of all participants and compliance with local, state, and national health guidelines.
- The quality of our formation offerings cannot suffer despite a pandemic.
- We are committed to the Gospel and to the desires of our families, leading us to make both On-Campus and Remote Learning options available. We also need an On-Campus plan that is flexible enough to “go remote” should a stay-at-home order be issued.
- The need to create a learning environment that is both safe, but also conducive to Christian formation -- maintaining the dignity of the human person which does not see each individual through a lens of fear as a vector of disease.
- A need to act as responsible stewards of parish resources, particularly in times of economic difficulty and exorbitant cleaning costs.
- A call to further develop last year’s pilot program, Flexible Family Faith Formation, that it might bless more families.
- A simple formation plan that does not place undue pressure and stress on families in the midst of a public health crisis.



“Your children’s ‘little eyes’ gradually memorize and interpret with the heart that faith is one of the greatest inheritances you have received from your parents and ancestors...And if you hand on the faith and live it well, that is where the transmission happens.” - Pope Francis

Formation Plan

As with any and all plans, the following will be continually evaluated and revised as necessary.

FAMILY FAITH

Families with children only in grades 3-8, or in both the Atrium (age 3 - grade 2) and grades 3-8 will participate in Family Faith:

ON-CAMPUS OPTION

- Whole families (i.e. parents and children) will be assigned to one formation session at St. Gertrude each month from October 2020 - April 2021 (7 sessions total).
- Each session will last 50 minutes and sessions will be offered the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Sundays of the month at both 9:00am and 11:00am in the St. Gertrude School cafeteria, so as to not conflict with the current Mass schedule. We will also make available a Tuesday session from 6:30-7:30pm.
- Families with children also participating in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (age 3 - grade 2) will be dropped off in their assigned Atrium.
- All remaining family members (i.e. parents and children in grades 3-8) will sit together at an assigned table in the school cafeteria. Tables will be appropriately spaced to allow for proper physical distancing from other households. Light refreshments will be provided.
 - If a family has high school teens, those students are welcome to attend these family sessions.
- On-Campus sessions will be limited to 12 families per session.
- Over the next two months, we will be designing a highly dynamic formation program that is family-based and child-centered. This program will aim to unlock the Bible by providing a foundational understanding of the basic plot. It will be capable of engaging your whole family during the once-per-month session and through simple and appropriate at home follow-up opportunities. Further details on the contents of the formation program will be available as October approaches.

REMOTE LEARNING OPTION

- Families will attend one Family Faith session remotely each month from October 2020 - April 2021 (7 sessions total).
- Each session will last 50 minutes and sessions will be available via livestream the 3rd Sunday of the month at both 9:00am and 11:00am.
- Prior to a remote formation session, we will coordinate with families to ensure they have all necessary materials.
- Families will need access to audio and video capabilities in order to participate in the remote learning option.

CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD (CGS)

ON-CAMPUS OPTION

- Students 3 years old through 2nd grade will have regularly scheduled Catechesis of the Good Shepherd in the Atrium. Therefore CGS will be implemented as follows:
 - To keep smaller, and therefore safer, numbers of children in our atrium space, we are offering biweekly (every other week) Atrium times.
 - To continue to walk with your children and family on the 'off week', we are offering several new opportunities:
 - Online virtual prayer and singing time for families that will happen in a live format with several times offered a week.
 - CGS work will be available for checking out and taking home for a week. In order for a work to be taken home, a brief in-person presentation will be given to both parent and child. The works will be sanitized before and after being checked out. Please be respectful of returning works in a timely manner.



REMOTE LEARNING OPTION



- We are unable to offer a remote-only learning option for CGS.
 - In accordance with guidelines given by CGSUSA, recorded presentations are not ideal and are frowned upon to do. Because of the nature of the Atrium of receiving presentations (announcements of the Word) and then work time to absorb the message, moments in the Atrium cannot be 'realized' electronically.
 - Therefore, should stay-at-home orders arise, we will provide additional at-home resources and support.
 - If a child has been a part of the atrium before and your family prefers to only participate in at-home opportunities you have that option. If a child has never been in an Atrium before, unfortunately he or she may not participate remotely.

FAMILY FAITH PREFERENCE

Please visit the website (stgertrude.org/religiouseducation) to sign your family up for either the On-Campus Religious Education option or the Remote Learning Religious Education option. You will also be asked to list various preferences regarding time, etc. You will be notified of your family's Religious Education schedule by Tuesday, September 1st.

*Should the Sunday Mass schedule change, the formation sessions will adjust accordingly.

PRAYER

We invite all of our families to join us in entrusting the health and well-being of all participants, volunteers, and St. Gertrude staff members to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. We pray that everyone during this time would be sustained by and experience deeply the peace of Jesus Christ, a peace which the world cannot give. Each day, our team will pray a Memorare for this intention.

THE MEMORARE

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother. To thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.



ANGELICO, Fra Virgin Mary Annunciate 1431-33

Sacramental Preparation

FIRST RECONCILIATION AND FIRST HOLY COMMUNION (GRADE 2)

- In addition to biweekly (twice a month) atrium time and live online prayer time and material check-out optional opportunities, 2nd graders preparing for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of First Holy Communion will need to attend the following with a parent:
 - 6 additional meditation series for one hour each. These will be offered monthly at various times to accommodate schedules and allow for smaller physically distant groups.
 - A Retreat the Saturday before First Reconciliation and the Saturday before First Holy Communion. Two retreats total.



CONFIRMATION (GRADE 8)

- In addition to the Family Faith program described above, 8th graders coming forward as candidates for the Sacrament of Confirmation will attend the following:
 - Monthly Confirmation-specific sessions on St. Gertrude's campus. Sessions will run from 9:00am-9:50am and will take place on the 4th Sunday of the month (October-November and January-April).
 - An online, livestream option will be made available only for those families who are already participating in remote Family Faith sessions. Confirmation livestream sessions will take place the 4th Sunday of the month from 11:00-11:50am.
 - Retreat experience(s)
 - Other necessary items as communicated

Health and Safety Guidelines

FACE COVERINGS

- We will abide by the State of Ohio's requirements for face coverings. Given the ever-changing nature of these circumstances, the precise requirements will be announced prior to the first weekend of October. We are grateful in advance for your cooperation and patience.

HEALTH SCREENING

- Parents should ensure that any attendee of Family Faith or Catechesis of the Good Shepherd has a temperature below 100°F and is free of any symptoms prior to arriving at St. Gertrude. Symptoms range from mild to severe and include the following: Fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea. Parents are encouraged to check the website of the Center for Disease Control (CDC) for information on symptoms and when to seek medical care. These standards apply for all St. Gertrude employees and all volunteer catechists. We will have thermometers on hand in order to assess a participant's temperature as needed.



THOSE PRESENTING SYMPTOMS AT HOME

- Parents should keep their child(ren) at home if they are ill. Any child or catechist with a fever of 100 degrees or greater or symptoms of possible COVID-19 virus infection should not attend any formational program. Someone with symptoms of COVID-19 are encouraged to contact their health care provider to discuss testing and medical care. All St. Gertrude employees and volunteers will do the same.

THOSE PRESENTING SYMPTOMS ON-CAMPUS

- If the child's parent is present (e.g. Family Faith), the whole family will be asked to leave the formation session.
- If the child's parent is not present (e.g. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd):
 - Symptomatic children will be isolated and monitored by staff.
 - Parents will be notified if their child is exhibiting symptoms and be asked to take them home.
- A participant, volunteer, or staff member who is symptomatic with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 may not attend Family Faith or Catechesis of the Good Shepherd until all of the following criteria are met:
 - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery has taken place, defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications; and,
 - Improvement in respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath); and
 - At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

KNOWN EXPOSURE TO COVID-19

- A participant, volunteer, or staff member who has been in close contact with a positive case of confirmed COVID-19 should not attend any formational program for 14 days since exposure.
- Close contact is defined as anyone that was within 6 feet of a positive COVID-19 case for 15 minutes in the 48 hours prior to being positive or symptomatic. This would include anyone with or without a mask.
 - Asymptomatic contacts who test negative should self-quarantine for 14 days from their last exposure (i.e., close encounter with confirmed or probable COVID-19 case). Close contacts should self-isolate and be managed as a probable COVID-19 case. Close contacts should self-quarantine and be monitored for 14 days after their last exposure, with linkage to clinical care for those who develop symptoms. All close contacts need to be symptom free and no fever for 72 hours (3 days) without fever reducing medication.
 - St. Gertrude will contact Hamilton County Public Health when there are positive or suspected cases of COVID-19 within our programs. All contact tracing and positive COVID-19 requirements / guidelines are subject to change based on CDC and ODH requirements and guidelines.
 - Since close contact is defined as anyone that was within 6 feet of a positive COVID-19 case (for 15 minutes in the 48 hours prior to being positive or symptomatic), participants, volunteers, or staff within the same formation area would not necessarily be in close contact with one another. In cases of COVID-19, we will report to Hamilton County who will give guidance on close contacts. Our formation spaces are set up to avoid close contact.

CLEANING AND SANITATION

- Specific to Family Faith in the School Cafeteria:
 - All touchable surfaces in the hallway and school cafeteria will be disinfected prior to and immediately following the 9:00am Family Faith session.
 - In addition, alternate seating and tables will be used to further decrease shared surfaces.
- Specific to the Atrium:
 - Children will be provided individual art boxes containing pencils, scissors, glue sticks etc. to eliminate sharing of those materials.
 - Children will have assigned tables.
 - While children are doing personal work or group prayer circle time on the floor, social distancing will be ensured by towels being carefully placed by the catechist. We will provide and clean the towels.
 - Children will sanitize their hands upon entering the atrium and before and after each work.
 - All work will be done individually and not in groups.
 - If a child coughs/sneezes/ etc on the work they are doing, it will be removed until cleaned.
 - After each class, the atrium will be sanitized with an electrostatic wand and hospital grade disinfectant.
 - No holy water will be used and any works deemed unsafe will be removed.



“Graced with the dignity and office of fatherhood and motherhood, parents will energetically acquit themselves of a duty which devolves primarily on them, namely education and especially religious education.” (Gaudium et Spes, no. 48)