MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 14, 2020
TO: All Clergy, Religious, Seminarians, Principals, Religious Education Directors and Diocesan Staff
FROM: Bishop Oscar A. Solis
WHAT: Opening of Religious Education (Faith Formation) and Catholic Schools; Updates; Diocesan Pastoral Plan

Greetings of Christ’s peace and love! I pray that you had a great summer and made the best of the unusual circumstances brought about by the pandemic. Next week, Catholic schools in our Diocese will open the new academic year offering face to face in classroom instruction. Based on the survey conducted by the principals the past months, most of the parents have opted for the traditional method of instruction like other Catholic schools in the nation. However, other schools will use modified forms of instruction due to the size of classrooms and the number of students. Some also will have a hybrid format integrating remote instruction according to staffing capabilities.

I am grateful to Mark Longe, Superintendent of Catholic Schools and all our principals working together since March to provide the best possible instruction and a healthy and safe environment for all of the students, teachers, staff and other workers under the present circumstances. They have evaluated the situation and come up with a plan that suits each respective institution incorporating sanitary and hygiene practices recommended by the State Health Department.

Furthermore, pastors are planning to resume the Religious Education or faith formation of children and youth in our parishes. Let us continue to exercise charity and express our love and respect for one another, especially the elderly and vulnerable by helping prevent the spread of the infectious and deadly coronavirus. Please review the updated protocols and pertinent information to help protect the life of others and safeguard the health and wellbeing of everyone.

While our Churches and Catholic schools attempt to take appropriate precautions consistent with the advice of the public authorities, students, parents, school staff and parish communities, please understand that they assume the risk of contracting COVID-19 anytime and anywhere in public since such measures do not guarantee to eliminate the risk of infection.

Kindly take note of the reminders to assist us in carrying out the mission of Christ faithfully, responsibly and effectively. This weekend, let us also offer our prayer intentions for all the students, their parents, faculty and staff as they start the new school year.

Thank you for your collaboration, unity and solidarity in our mission.
DEANS / COUNCIL OF PRIESTS (President)
Meeting Agenda - August 5, 2020

I Opening Prayer / Welcome

II Deanery Updates

III Diocesan Pastoral Plan during Pandemic (Reminders)

A. Church Ministries: Let us resume our church ministries, programs, regular events and gatherings to renew the faith life of the parishioners, build stronger community spirit and form missionary Disciples of Christ.

B. Public Worship & Gatherings

1. Holy Mass – Directives (Reminders)
2. Liturgy Preparation and Planning
3. Worshippers Guide – What to expect during Holy Mass and other Church Services

C. Faith Formation

- Survey of Parish Religious Education and Catholic Schools during pandemic; Recommendations
- Diocesan Guidelines for Academic Year 2020-2021: CDC and State directives allow for the resumption of in-person or face to face instruction except in some counties.

D. Stewardship and Development: The pandemic brings tremendous financial strain to the economy that affected our Church and ministry. The limit in the number of faithful coming to Church and the financial challenges of families have affected our main source of revenues - Sunday offerings and donations – that support our parish operations and ministries. It is very critical that parishioners continue to support our Church, our diocese, parishes and mission by rekindling or renewing the spirit of Christian Stewardship

IV Suggested Agenda for Deanery Meetings
1. Parish Life – spiritual and pastoral ministries
2. Special outreach to parishioners especially the elderly, sick and those in need.
3. Communication and use of technology (social media platforms)
4. Formation of parish leaders
5. Stewardship and Finances – offerings and donation; budget and fiscal responsibility

V Closing Prayer
**ADDENDUM:  III - Diocesan Strategic Plan during Pandemic (Reminders)**

**General Provisions:** The mission of the Christ and the ministries of the Church must always give first priority to the protection of the sanctity of life in all ages and stages, and safeguard the health and the safety of the people, the priests and ministers as well as promote the common good.

Government measures and Diocesan directives such as social distancing, use of face covering, sanitizing, and the limit number of people allowed must be observed to provide the People of God the utmost care and concern for their well-being. It is always more prudent to be on the safer side applying abundant caution than putting the community and our Church at greater risk and possibility of liability.

**A. Church Ministries:** The pandemic has disrupted every facet of our life, society and the Church. However, we should do our best to carry on with our life and ministry safely and do not succumb to fear to sit passively. Rather, we must find ways to remain faithful to our parish ministries in pursuing the mission of our Church.

1. **Planning**

   - Plan to restart church ministries, programs, regular events and gatherings as to renew the faith life of the parishioners, build stronger community spirit and form missionary Disciples of Christ.

   - Regroup parish leaders and other ministers to discuss and help define a plan of action to carry out the mission of the church in your parish community. Meet all ministers and leaders and set the timeframe for implementation and periodic evaluation.

   - Re-engage parishioners by bringing back activities, programs and events that are effective in strengthening their faith and generating interests for their active involvement and participation in the life of the Church and community.

   - Invite and prepare a welcoming environment to pave the way for their return, restore their sense of belonging and foster continued participation in the life of their faith community.

   - Re-establish connection with parishioners to attend to their spiritual needs by providing vibrant and uplifting liturgies to nourish their longing for the Eucharist and restoring programs to promote fellowship and build community spirit in spite of the limitations.

   - Inform the parish community of the “NEW NORMAL” they will encounter when they come to Church for Holy Mass, celebrate other Sacraments, participate in the various ministries and attend parish gatherings.

   - Utilize digital technology and social media platforms in addition to the usual printed format such as parish bulletins in order to provide necessary information, bring awareness and educate
the parish about what is available for their continued formation, enhancement of their spiritual growth and the promotion of a stronger community life.

B. Public Worship & Gatherings

1. Holy Mass - Directives:

- The Church grants all the faithful Dispensation from the Sunday obligation to attend Mass during this crisis.

- CDC recommends anyone older than 65 years of age with a compromised health condition and/or caring for the sick (have higher risk of contracting COVID-19) should stay home.

- Even though dispensed for their Sunday obligation to attend Mass, the faithful are strongly encouraged to participate in a live-streamed or televised Mass and make a spiritual communion.

- Frequency of Masses: Due to pastoral necessity (Canon 905§20), priests in the Diocese of Salt Lake City are permitted to celebrate the Holy Mass twice on weekdays and three times on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation. Should any additional Masses be necessary, please seek permission of the Bishop.

- Live streaming Masses should continue during this phase for the homebound.

- Implement face Coverings and Social Distancing in the sanctuary area at all times.

- Designate special place for Lectors and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

- Consider the number of priests and other liturgical ministers that can be safely accommodated in the sanctuary, allowing for physical distancing and ease of movement.

- Limit music ministry to a cantor and an instrumentalist (4 member choir maximum).

- Altar servers should always observe physical distancing, hygiene and with careful supervision.

- Simple Entrance and Recessional procession is recommended.

- No Offertory Procession; gifts of bread and wine should be brought from a credence table near the altar, with the water bowl and finger towel.

- No hand shaking during the Sign of Peace.

- Consecrate at each Mass a sufficient number of hosts for that celebration only.

- Use covered ciborium or bowl to avoid the contamination of the hosts.
• Priests and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should visibly sanitize their hands both before and after the distribution of Communion.

• Announce to the faithful how approach for Holy Communion; ministers may assist.

• Distribution of Holy Communion is on the hand during the pandemic.

• Concelebrating priests should be limited and partaking of Precious Blood for Holy Communion is of personal discretion.

• Priests and ministers should wear a face covering while distributing Communion.

• Clean/Purify all sacred vessels; change purificator and finger towel after each Mass.

• Sanitize the Church every after Mass or liturgical celebration.

2. Liturgy Preparation and Planning

• Define the parish plan according to the diocesan directives always considering the needs people with disabilities.

• Communicate and inform the parishioners of the plan and directives.

• Form and train your parish team in the implementation and evaluation of the plan to provide guidance for the faithful’s compliance when in the church.

• Follow public health advice to reduce the risk of transmission of Covid-19 by emphasizing the importance of strict adherence to physical distancing, limit number of attendance, use of face covering, good hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and regular cleaning and sanitizing of shared spaces.

• Provide hand sanitizer near the entrances to the church. Secure sufficient supply of disinfectant to clean the church after each service. CDC guidelines will be helpful in disinfecting the space.

• Remove all hymnals and missalettes (and other items) from the pews and store these for the duration of the pandemic.

  • Use disposable worship aids for the faithful at each Mass and discard after each liturgy. The use of digital projection and screens is an alternative and strongly encouraged but be mindful of appropriate copyright licenses.

  • Mark seats or tape off rows for seating in the church with at least 6 feet distance from each other, except for the members of the same family. This provides an estimate or guess calculation of the number of people allowed in the church building at one time.
• Provide information for use of restroom; limit the number of people who enter a restroom at the same time, and mark the floor for people to stand in line, maintaining a 6 feet distance from each other.

• Use signage and markings wherever it will be helpful to prepare the church building and provide guidance or directions to help people to maintain physical distance, procedures entering the church and when approaching for Holy Communion.

3. Worshippers Guide: What to Expect in Holy Mass and Church Services

Before Arriving:

• Take your temperature, if you have a fever, persistent cough or severe colds, please do not come to church. Avail of live stream Mass

• Stay home if you are ill or have been exposed to someone who is ill

• Please bring a face covering (masks) and be prepared to wear it while in the church

• Call your parish office for information and other instructions for Mass attendance if signing up is required

When Arriving

• Enter the Church in marked doorways with your face covering

• Wait patiently as ushers direct you to the pews with markings indicating where to sit

• Sanitizers are available at the entrance and use it as needed

• Please obey social distancing at all times (look for spacing marks on the floor)

• Keep your face covering or mask on at all times except for receiving Holy Communion

• If collection baskets are not passed, please leave your offering in the boxes provided at the Church entrance and exit areas

During the Mass:

• Do not change seat during the Mass or Service

• No physical sign of peace will be exchanged during the Mass

• Maintain six feet social distancing in the Communion line

• Leave your seat only when directed by the usher
• Approach the priest with your face covering
• Receive the host by extending your hand to the priest or minister
• After moving six feet to the right, remove your mask and consume the host
• Replace your face covering or mask
• Follow instruction to return to your pew

After the Mass

• Please leave worship aids you may have brought with you
• Follow instructions of usher for dismissal from your pew
• Use only designated exit doors
• Continue to wear your face covering or mask until you leave the worship area
• Do not congregate outside the church doors

While parish staffs will attempt to take appropriate precautions consistent with the advice of public health authorities, parishioners and guests should understand that they assume the risk of contracting COVID-19 any time they enter a public space since such precautions do not eliminate the risk of infection. Thank you.

C. FAITH FORMATION - Parish Religious Education and Catholic Schools

SURVEY during pandemic (March to July) – Practices or Status of Religious Education
(See attached document with more details)

*Different kinds of Religious Education Program: content, duration and resources
*Need to Strengthen our Religious Education or Formation
*Adapt the Goals and Strategies of our Diocesan Plan
*Implement Diocesan Wide Comprehensive Religious Education, including Catholic Schools

1. Start planning to shift to Grade 1-12 Religious Education or Formation
   - basic 2 year preparation for first Penance/Holy Communion and Confirmation
   - in between formation for Grades 4-6
   - Youth Ministry Formation after Confirmation: (Grades 9-12)

2. Immediate Preparation
- Plan with Parents, DRE’s, catechists, other leaders and volunteers

- Offer training for catechists – contact Susan Northway, Director of Faith Formation; basic catechist certification; master catechist, etc

- Provide the catechist and teachers the recommended Books or Resources approved by the USCCB that our diocese will use

- In need of catechist or prospective DRE – graduates of LEM & EMAUS

3. Get ready to implement it on year 2021

4. Make adjustment to parish Religious Education/Formation schedule this year

Note: We administer the Sacrament when children/youth are fully prepared to receive it – their minds and hearts are formed through their personal experience or encounter with Christ in their life, and are transformed as children of God and missionary Disciples of Christ, ready to live and share their faith to others.

1. Diocesan Guidelines for Academic Year 2020-2021: CDC and State directives allow for the resumption of in-person or face to face instruction except in some counties.

Goal: To protect the health and well-being of all students, catechists, faculty, staff, volunteers and the greater community while continuing to provide high quality education rooted in our Catholic faith and moral values.

Objective: Parish and Schools must continue to develop and provide various standards, policies and procedures at each institution to help protect the health and wellbeing of all.

Strategies: Present an Overall or General Plan for in-person instruction and possibility of digital / remote learning or both.

- Plan and implement the Diocesan initiative of pursuing a comprehensive faith formation program or curricular offerings including Catholic Schools from Grades 1 through 12.

- Target date of implementation target is Year 2021-2022

- Timeframe of formation classes: Two (2) years of immediate preparation for First Penance and Eucharist, as well as for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

- Use Diocesan recommended resources approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

- Establish a system of Communication to inform parents, catechist, staff and students.

- Define reasonable fees and prepare occupancy limits for classrooms and other facilities.
• Insure mandatory use of face coverings (except for serious, documented medical reasons), social distancing and hand hygiene practices.

• Create a plan for daily wellness screening and temperature check when deemed necessary.

• Institute the practice of facility cleaning and sanitizing or disinfecting.

• Limit number of students allowed for various activities and group gathering size.

• Enhance building ventilation where feasible.

• Prepare contingency measures for incidents of infection of a teacher, catechist or student.

• Outline isolation procedures as needed for those manifesting COVID-19 symptoms.

• Specify transportation routines: entrance & exit, drop off and pick up.

• Establish prudent plans for meals and recess time.

• Adapt education and monitoring of the policies or guidelines allowing reasonable accommodations for those with higher medical risks (immune compromised health conditions).

• Form a team (parish council or parents/teachers and other experts) to develop protocols and periodic evaluation according to the directives from the CDC and State or local health department.

**D. Stewardship and Development**

*The pandemic brings tremendous financial strain to the economy that affected our Church and ministry. The limit in the number of faithful coming to Church and the financial challenges of families have affected our main source of revenues - Sunday offerings and donations – that support our parish operations and ministries. It is very critical that parishioners continue to support our Church, our diocese, parishes and mission by rekindling or renewing the spirit of Christian Stewardship.*

• Promote stewardship as a way of Christian life and discipleship. We rely on Divine providence to attend to our divine commission and vocation to proclaim the Gospel to all people. However, we need the means to pursue the mission entrusted to us.

• Encourage sacrificial giving and joyful offering to the Lord. In light of our deficiencies, help the faithful recognize the abundance of God’s blessings in our lives and not forget our responsibility to offer and share our gifts no matter how small.

• Offer various opportunities for supporting and donating to the Church.
• Reactivate your Finance Council (form one if you do not have yet) for consultation and collaboration to assist pastors and principals in maintaining a financially healthy parish that operates with a balance budget.

• Utilize the parish and school website, and other social media platforms along with the weekly printed bulletin to teach, to inspire and to encourage parishioners to contribute and support the Church, our diocese and your parish.

• Establish On-Line Giving as alternate means of giving aside from regular Sunday offerings and donation envelopes. Please call the Office of Stewardship and Development for assistance. Our staff will be happy to serve you.

• Coordinate with parish leaders and organize gatherings and fundraising events to promote stewardship and community fellowship.

• Support the DDD (Diocesan Development Drive). It constitutes a fourth of the Diocesan Annual Budget, provide subsidies to our Missions, financial support to some of poor parishes ministries and other apostolates, formation of our seminarians and Permanent Deacons

• Promote Catholic Foundation of Utah to parishioners and provide necessary information how to make donations in support your parish through endowments, trusts and bequests.

• Most important of all, we must do everything in a spirit of prayer, with faith in the goodness of God, and hope in His unending blessings.

Thank you for your continued collaboration and support as we do we all work together in carrying out our mission during these challenging times. Let us always pray for one another, for the people of God we serve, especially those affected by the pandemic, for all health care personnel and their families.