



Diocese of Joliet Youth Formation Re-Opening August 12, 2020

Dear Pastors and Youth Formation Leaders,

I am ever so grateful to you for all the rigorous preparations you are making for the re-opening of all Youth Formation programs and ministries. I fully realize the demands, tensions and issues that face you.

I am very pleased to advise you that our plans are moving forward with full speed for the timely reopening of all parish opportunities for children and youth from birth through high school – which encompasses all Religious Education programs and Youth Ministries. Please know that certification must be issued for all programs whether reopening virtually or in person. Fully virtual programs will still need to submit the Form 2 Program Reopening Plan (attached) indicating that they will open virtually. If at any time, a certified virtual program moves to an in-person format, a second plan submission must be made. This plan will need to be certified before you can resume in-person.

The Office of Youth Formation has received 111 program plan submissions to-date and they are working in collaboration with Chris Nye and the diocesan re-opening team to get all programs certified in the order they were received. All programs will undergo a two-stage process review and as of Tuesday, August 11th:

- 28 programs plans have passed Stages 1 and 2 and are certified.
- 51 program directors received an email stating that revisions are needed. An addendum form was attached with all points to be addressed before the reopening plan can be accepted for final review.

Please be aware that the Catholic School review process ended early last week, and the Youth Formation review process began on Thursday, August 6th. We anticipate that all program reopening plans will receive certification or be issued an addendum by Friday, August 21st at the latest. I thank you for your cooperation and your understanding.

The Office of Youth Formation, the Catholic Schools Office, and the Office of Adult Formation are working together to ensure that all standards for parish reopening, school reopening, and the reopening of youth formation programs are to be consistent across the board to ensure clarity and consistency with all reopening procedures. The following protocols are to be applied consistently for all parish programs or ministries whether or not a certification process has been required:

- Face masks to be worn by all, at all times.
- Six-foot social distancing is required between individuals at all time. This includes all liturgical celebrations, classroom environments, programs, ministries, parish buildings, and parish office spaces.

- Temperatures must be taken before entrance to the building is permitted. It is highly encouraged that you take temperatures before children exit their cars, and record attendance consistently should the need for contact tracing arise.
- Frequent sanitization must be in effect – especially after use of common space. Every program director must be diligent to ensure a high standard is met for the health and safety of all.

It is recognized that some may have different opinions about these measures. Nonetheless, they are universally advocated by recognized experts and medical scientists. We want to protect all to the very best of our ability.

I want to announce that we will be filming two videos in support of you in your efforts to reopen. First, I will be addressing all parents of the Diocese of Joliet announcing the reopening of Youth Formation programs and ministries which will include an invitation back to Mass and for registration to Religious Education programs, Youth Ministries and to Catholic Schools. Secondly, I will record a video that you may share if you are struggling in any way to recruit catechists and volunteers due to the increased need this Fall. Both videos will be recorded in both English and in Spanish, and you will be notified as soon as they are available.

I am very grateful for each of you and your tireless efforts in Youth Formation as you adapted last Spring and made necessary adjustments. You are to be commended for the enormous amounts of time you have spent in preparation for Fall 2020. You enjoy my unwavering support.

Please join me in fervent prayer that the Good Lord will guide us on this journey.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Apostolic Administrator
Diocese of Joliet

cc: Most Reverend Ronald Hicks