

## **Catechesis of the Good Shepherd – St Luke Covid-19 Plan**

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd considers the needs and well-being of the whole child, physical, mental and spiritual. In these challenging times, there will be modified practices to best uphold all of these aspects of the child's health.

In order to minimize the possibility of exposure to the Covid-19, the number of children attending any given atrium session will be limited to 8 children per level. In the past the number of children in the program has not exceeded this number. If, however, the number of registered children exceed 8 per level, we will modify the calendar and assign participating families to a smaller group. In this event, in-person meetings will be less frequent than the current calendar indicates. This year the schedule will be approximately twice a month. Because of the lower frequency of in-person meetings, I plan to prepare "at home" resources for the children each month to supplement their atrium experience.

For any family who chooses not to participate in any in-person sessions this year, I will also be preparing "at home" resources.

### ***Procedures for In-person sessions:***

#### **Health Screening:**

Each family is responsible to do a health screening before coming to atrium. Please do not come to atrium if you or anyone in your family:

- Is feeling unwell.
  - Covid-19 Symptoms include: cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell.
  - Have a fever of 100.4°F or higher. Fever must be gone (without the aid of drugs) for 24 hours or more.
- Has a significant new rash, particularly when other symptoms are present
- Large amounts of nasal discharge in the absence of allergy diagnosis
- Has been in close contact with a person who has Covic-19

*Close contact is defined as: someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 48 hours before illness onset until the time the patient is isolated.*

#### **Entry Procedure**

A designated person will be present at the door to the St Luke's and will hold it open for each family as they arrive, in order to eliminate cross contamination of household germs from the door handle.

Every individual will wash their hands upon entering the kitchen area of St Luke parish hall.

*This should not be a problem for any of the children as this has been our normal entry practice for several years.*

*What will be new for the children is the hands-free soap dispenser.*

The faucet handle will be sanitized between each family.

- There will be sanitizer at the sink for this purpose.
- The parent of each family will be responsible for sanitizing the faucet handle after all family members have washed their hands.

In order to avoid large groups of people congregating in the kitchen we will have the children proceed directly into the atrium after removing their shoes and washing their hands.

At the entry of each atrium, there will be a sanitizing station for all to use before entering the atrium.

Additionally, there will be hands-free soap dispensers in the downstairs bathrooms. The children will be taught how use the dispensers and how to turn off the faucets using a paper towel.

### **In the Atrium**

Each child will have their own work space (typically a small table or rug). The work spaces will be spaced at least 4½ feet apart, and they will not be facing any other child's work space. \*

Each child will have their own set of "high-use" items, such as pencils, eraser, clipboard, etc.

There will be sanitizing wipes available throughout each atria. The children will be taught to sanitize their hands before working with any of the communal materials. (e.g. diorama materials kept on shelves, or the articles in the altar corner).

Weather permitting, windows will be open to provide increased ventilation on atrium days and during the atrium session.

### **Face Coverings**

All adults will wear a face mask or shield in the atrium at all times.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the CDC have stated that: Appropriate and consistent use of masks may be challenging for some students, teachers, and staff, including:

- Younger students, such as those in early elementary school.
- Students, teachers, and staff with severe asthma or other breathing difficulties.
- Students, teachers, and staff with special educational or healthcare needs, including intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, and sensory concerns or tactile sensitivity.

*\*More than likely the work spaces will be 6+ feet apart, however the space has not yet been set up.*

Many of the children who attend atrium are younger than elementary school age. We have always accepted children in the atrium regardless of any special needs, and in the case of younger children, often any developmental difficulties present have yet to be diagnosed. It is not within the scope of the director of an atrium nor a catechist to diagnose any special needs in the children. Additionally, the CDC and AAP have stated that there is “An expanding body of scientific evidence continues to support the finding that children younger than 10 years are least likely to acquire COVID-19 and least likely to transmit to others when infected, even in very close-contact scenarios, such as within households.” Therefore, we will require masks only upon entry into and exit from the atria for Levels I & II. In Level III the children may remove their masks while working alone at their designated personal work space, but will wear them for group discussions.

Often, in the atrium, especially with the younger children, there is a need for one on one assistance. At these times, the adult catechist will stand/kneel/sit side-by-side students (rather than face-to-face), as recommended by the Vermont Agency of Education and the Vermont Department of Health.

#### Overall Safety Procedures:

The CDC recommends: “If masks cannot be used, make sure to take other measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread, including social distancing, frequent hand washing, and cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces.”

In order to provide a safe environment that fosters relationship with Jesus, the Good Shepherd we will be dividing the groups so the number of families interacting is low, we are putting into place procedures so that the spread of germs through touching doorknobs and faucet handles will be minimized, staggering the arrival time, providing the means for frequent handwashing and sanitizing, applying strategies so that the children are physically distanced while in the atrium, minimizing the sharing of materials, using facial coverings during entry and exit times when physical distancing may be compromised, and cleaning/disinfecting the rooms and materials between sessions.

Despite these safety precautions, all families need to be aware that no plan will mitigate every possible eventuality. There is no way to provide a completely germ/virus free environment and the possibility of infection being transmitted is present whenever two or more are gathered. However, that with proper planning and dedicated adherence to this plan, we can provide a spiritually rich, and joyful environment that is infused with practical and sustainable health and safety measures.