



## **St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Catholic Diocese of Chicago**

**372 South Prairie Avenue, Elmhurst, Illinois, 60126-4020, USA**

**August 1, 2020**

### **Guidelines for the Sunday Schools for Academic Year (2020-2021)**

Considering the current situation due to COVID-19, we anticipate that in-person Faith Formation classes may not be possible in Fall 2020 when the new Academic Year starts in the Sunday Schools of our Diocese. So, the Diocesan Faith Formation Department would like to give certain guidelines for Transmitting Faith to Sunday School Children in the Era of COVID-19.

As this crisis is going to be with us for a while and having in-person training is not possible due to safety, the Department of Faith Formation is requesting parishes/missions to continue the virtual classes for the next academic year. With little time to prepare, our parishes and missions have had to respond quickly to the COVID-19 pandemic by moving Sunday School from our churches to a virtual learning platform. As we start our next academic year, our parishes/missions are now seeking to re-package instruction tailored to virtual learning.

The Department of Faith Formation is requesting parishes/missions to be familiar with the recent Diocesan safe environment guidance related to virtual learning. In addition to the safe environment guidelines, the Department of Faith Formation recommends the following for the Sunday Schools for the next academic year (2020-2021).

- Each parish/mission has discretion on the start date of the Sunday School academic year based on the local needs and conditions or aligns the start date based on the local jurisdictions' public-school opening.
- Parishes/missions must provide parents on how the faith formation program will be conducted via virtual classrooms
- Teachers can never be as present in virtual learning programs as they are in a real class, so it is all the more important to have active parental involvement from the beginning. Each parishes/mission may decide how the parents should involve in the faith formation program
- Sunday School Principals and teachers must be familiar with the new Diocesan safe environment policies related to online learning.
- The vicar/mission director must approve the online classes prior to scheduling online classes.
- The Sunday School office must keep a log of who is taking which class, the content of the class and the time.
- Virtual learning options include a Livestream class meeting using WebEx, MS Teams, Zoom, or other group conference platforms such as podcasts and class chat forums. These are optional for younger students. Give parents at least 24 hours' notice before scheduling the virtual classroom.

- Parishes must have a minimum of 30 Sunday School days with at least 40-60 minutes of direct teaching per Sunday during an academic year. Teachers must take attendance similar to in-person classes.
- Due to the current situation and unavailability of flights from India, the Diocese don't have enough textbooks to distribute. Once the situation becomes normal, we will update you on the availability of textbooks.
- The Department of Faith Formation will be uploading a pdf of each chapter from grades 1-12 textbook on our website. The Department is also working with few parishes/missions on creating 20-30-minute videos of each chapter from grades 1-12. These videos are intended only for the textbook chapter content presentation.
- These two videos are of a maximum of 20 to 30-minute presentation will help with online teaching and be available on YouTube for the Sunday Schools in our Diocese.
- Teachers must keep in touch with their students and encourage them to watch the videos and review the pdf version of the textbook. The teacher must continue the lesson with additional discussion and clarifications by using any means of virtual platforms.
- It is highly recommended that a minimum 30-60 minutes recollection or prayer session for the teachers before they start the academic year in each parish.
- Provide mothers and fathers, the spiritual heads of the domestic Church, with suggestions for leading the family in morning and evening prayer, the Rosary, the Church's daily Holy Qurbana readings, the Liturgy of the Hours, or other prayers.
- The virtual platforms that the parishes/missions own must not be used for personal use.
- The responsibility for ensuring student activities while using virtual platforms must be with parents. Parishes/Missions must ensure parents monitor their children's activities.
- It is appropriate to have a consent form from every parent to participate in virtual learning.
- Any safe environment issue (bullying, inappropriate content, comments, chats) must be addressed and reported appropriately.
- The Department of Faith Formation will update parishes on semester examinations, Bible Quiz, and classes based on the needs and conditions.

Fr. George Danavelil  
 Director  
 Department of Faith Formation