

July 17, 2020

Looking ahead to the new school year it is obvious that we are entering into largely unmapped territory and I suspect there will be a good deal of patience and compassion and wisdom needed.

I wish I could give you with some degree of certainty an account of what our Adult Faith Formation and Christian Formation Program for our children will look like but I cannot do that at this time, so I will give you some ideas that we have talked about and then you can tell us what you are thinking.

I am thinking that we have grades 1, 2, 4, and 5 meet on Saturday mornings, one grade per week. This will decrease the number of people in the building each week and decrease the sanitation that will be required.

We would utilize space in a manner that will allow for the recommended distancing and minimize the number of possible cross contaminations. I am thinking that for first and second grade a parent or other significant adult would be required to attend as we will not be able to allow the kids to group as normal.

The First Communion/Confession children and the 9th grade Confirmation children would meet one Sunday afternoon a month, the Communion kids would have to be accompanied by a parent or other significant adult.

We would include a special Sunday afternoon Mass component for all grades but special Masses for the 3rd and 9th grade would be a priority.

The 6, 7, and 8th grades could meet on Monday evenings, one Monday a month.

Additionally, I would like to create an online component made up of "lessons" that any teen and young or older adult in our parish would like to create and submit for consideration to be posted on a dedicated online site so that kids and families could access them at home anytime that they wanted to.

I don't like what I have seen of available online resources, they are more ideological than Catholic in the fullest sense of that word, I would want real Catholics to talk about what that has meant to them in their life.

I envision these “lessons” as, maybe, personal witness stories or recollections or memories that connect at some level with some aspect of Catholic Tradition, history, practice, or piety.

I could see an interesting aspect being in the telling of ethnic customs in how people did being “Catholic,” foods, marriage rituals, devotional practices and how they differ and why they were embraced in the various ethnic and racial groups that make up our parish.

I think it could be especially important to honestly, calmly and respectfully have people talk about the typical Catholic “way” of creating separate parishes based on ethnicity and why there are so few African American Catholics.

We will, also, include components that support Pope Francis’ encyclical Laudato Si and include the earth and all that is on and in it in our formation efforts.

People might tell of how their faith or the parish helped them get through a bad time or a death and they could tell of less serious encounters with their faith of parish such as their wedding day or the day a child was baptized or, perhaps, they could tell of a negative experience that they had with their faith, their doubts for instance, or a negative experience with a parish such as being refused a marriage or baptism or funeral.

These could be recorded at home or we can set up safe recording space on our grounds and be rather succinct and short and tailored to specific ages or groups.

Just thoughts at this point, what do you think?

I am fairly sure that many families will not return to CFP, so our numbers will be small and that may be an advantage because I would like to keep in some form our “eating together ministry,” but only time will tell how that will go.

I am especially interested in hearing from parents and catechists, current, past, or future.

All of this is tentative and dependent on what we see in the public schools that our children attend.

No matter what happens, in my opinion a year from now the Catholic Church in this country will not only appear to be much different, it will be much different.

We have not had resources invested in new strategies of pastoral ministry nor have we given much ground to legions of young people who are studying Catholic theology in the light of this century and decade, preferring to put our faith in a clerical centered church and clerics have of late been formed in hybrid atmospheres with not very much laterality in their study of theology and ministry.

The seminary that I was thrown out of over 50 years ago had a director that liked to denigrate the idea of ordinary Catholics having a say in the direction of their parish or the Catholic Church in general, he frequently said, "Most Catholics will follow a biretta on a broomstick!"

A biretta in that funny little black or red or red and black medieval head piece that some of the clergy find fashionable these days.

I would bet that old seminary director is proven dead wrong as we go forward and many Catholics will follow their own hearts as they consider the role religious faith and institutional affiliation plays in their life..