Dear Parents,

A blessed feast of Our Lady of Sorrows.

Given our current circumstances, the 2020-2021 Once-Weekly Catechism program will begin this week **online**. The one exception to this will be the **Level 2** class preparing for First Reconciliation & Holy Communion which will meet in the Parish Square at the regular time beginning Thursday. This is in keeping with the 10-person limit set out for our region.

The **Opening Mass** scheduled for this Thursday, September 17 has been **cancelled**. Instead, the Church will be open from 6:00 – 6:30 PM for parents to pick up their son or daughter’s catechism workbook. Parents may access the West Doors as usual as of 6 PM for pick-up on this night, but please be aware that you *must wear a mask* to do so.

Online instructions will be sent this week by your child’s catechist with information pertaining to his/her class for this year. Each Level will look a bit different in its online structure to accommodate the age and number of children in the class, the skills and technical aptitude of your child’s catechist, and the nature of the content being taught. The parish is aware that there are several families who have multiple children enrolled in the program; we are working out how to accommodate these families to ensure minimal conflicts. Please be patient as we work through these details. Many of our catechists also have children enrolled in the program which has created difficulties for our volunteers.

**Supplemental Class**

Parents of children in the Supplemental Class for First Reconciliation & Holy Communion will pick up the materials on Thursday as well for this additional class. The Supplemental Class will be completed entirely online. The instructor, Susin Cadman, will be contacting you to make individual arrangements to meet with your family online.

**Parent Meetings for First Reconciliation**

The four parent meetings scheduled for parents of children enrolled in the First Reconciliation & Holy Communion sacramental preparation will be held in-person at the Church (refer to the Parent Letter for dates). A reminder email will be sent out the week before with the finalized location for the meeting.

**Home Study**

Home study materials will be made available in early October for children registered to complete their work at home with parents. Parents who do not wish their child to attend classes this year may switch into the Home Study program before October 1 for Levels K-1, 3-7. There will be no penalty. Home schooling parents will be contacted at the beginning of October to arrange for pick-up of their child’s materials.

**Online Conduct (K-1, 3-7)**

As previously mentioned, the format for each level of online catechism classes will differ according to the plan set out by your child’s catechist. Please await an email from the catechist with specific instructions regarding your child’s first class this week.

Some Guidelines for Online Conduct:

* Sign in to your child’s online class early/on time;
* Make sure your child’s workbook, homework, and any other relevant materials are available;
* Mute your microphone to help keep background noise to a minimum;
* Unmute yourself when speaking;
* Parents can use the chat function to contact the catechist during the class with any concerns; any other general concerns can be communicated to the Faith Formation Office via phone or email;
* Position your child’s camera properly;
* Limit distractions for your child and avoid multi-tasking scenarios;
* Ensure your child is appropriately dressed (e.g., no pyjamas);
* Be respectful of the catechist’s time and efforts (continuous disruptions, inappropriate language, and/or misbehavior will not be tolerated—parents will be contact immediately and children may be removed from the class);

**Recording of Online Classes**

Should your child’s catechist need to record the class—for example, to share the lesson with an absent student—there is an attached document to sign and submit to the Faith Formation Office. We request that everyone sign this document at the beginning of the year and return it to your catechist or directly to the Faith Formation Office. Please note, it may be the case that your child’s catechist will not need to record any of the lessons this year.

**Future Considerations**

While we had hoped to begin this year online, it may be that we can continue in-person classes at some point during the year once the restrictions are lifted. The Faith Formation Office will advise parents of this decision if/when the time comes as in-person instruction is preferable to online modes. Again, parents who do not wish their child to attend in-person classes this year may switch into the Home Study program for Levels K-1, 3-7 before October 1. Contact the Faith Formation Office with any concerns.

Blessings to you all and prayers for the beginning of this year,

Caroline

Faith Formation Team