

IMPLEMENTING
**YOUTH FORMATION
IN YOUR PARISH**
IN 2020 - 2021



THE DIOCESE OF
HOUMA  THIBODAUX

Office of Parish Support

This document is designed to help both of you, **as Pastor and Coordinator of Youth Formation**, as you move forward with forming your young people as disciples by offering some suggestions to help you plan for the 2020 - 2021 year of formation. The options contained in here are offered as suggestions for youth formation in response to the current circumstances surrounding COVID-19. You may consider offering one or more of these options or a hybrid option, which could include a mix of opportunities. You will also find resource recommendations and guidelines that will help to ensure safety in regards to Safe Environment and COVID-19. The goal for this document is that it may help us to see what's possible this year and how we can safely bring those ideas to reality. There is no doubt that formation this year will take creativity. There is no one-size fits all for all of our communities. It will take patience, intentionality, and willingness to adapt. It will mean trying new things- not in a way that blazes on without boundaries, but that moves forward with consultation.... **and with the Lord.**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART 1

MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL FORMATION (GRADES 6-12)

1

A HOMESCHOOL OPTION

2

AN IN-HOME SMALL GROUPS OPTION

3

AN ON-SITE SMALL GROUPS OPTION

4

A VIRTUAL SMALL GROUPS OPTION

5

POTENTIAL RESOURCES FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL

PART 2

11th GRADE CONFIRMATION PREP

1

SACRAMENTAL GUIDELINES

2

A HOMESCHOOL OPTION

3

AN IN-HOME SMALL GROUPS OPTION

4

AN ON-SITE SMALL GROUPS OPTION

5

A VIRTUAL SMALL GROUPS OPTION

6

POTENTIAL RESOURCES FOR CONFIRMATION PREP

PART 3

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FORMATION (GRADES 1-5)

1

A HOMESCHOOL OPTION

2

AN ON-SITE SMALL GROUPS OPTION

3

POTENTIAL RESOURCES FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

PART 4

OUR MENTORS

AN OPTION FOR FOCUSING ON OUR MENTORS

APPENDIX A

CREATIVE WAYS TO CONNECT WITH TEENS

APPENDIX B

YOUTH FORMATION SAMPLE CALENDARS

APPENDIX C

CONFIRMATION ASSESSMENT

PART 1

MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL
(GRADES 6-12)

A HOMESCHOOL OPTION

One option that we have for our middle school and high school students is a homeschool option.

- Young people are engaged in formation at home with their parents. Using age appropriate video resources, students watch and discuss with parents from home.
- CYF and team are regularly checking in with parents and teens to assess progress and offer support and encouragement.

Additional elements that will enhance the homeschool experience:

- Include ongoing support for the parents, which could include regular check-ins and encouragements from members of the team. This may also include some initial coaching from CYF or team members on how to navigate the online resource, where to find discussion questions, or other tips for facilitating conversation at home.
- Consider opportunities for teens to gather either in person or virtually. Teens are invited and encouraged to attend these events and activities as a means for fun and connection. (Examples could include an outdoor movie night, virtual or social distanced Life/Edge Night, family picnic, zoom trivia night, or social media outreach) Some fun ideas can be found on the Office of Parish Support Youth Formation Page by clicking the *"2020-2021 Youth Formation Guide"* Button or in APPENDIX A to this document.
- Consider supplementing some sessions with other videos to change things up. For example, instead of the selected resource, every now and then you may watch a Fr. Mike Schmitz videos on Ascension Presents, a Fr. Brice video from our website, or even host a live Q&A with your own parish priest.
- Some sample calendars, showing how these additional elements might be incorporated, can be found on the Office of Parish Support Youth Formation Page by clicking the *"2020-2021 Youth Formation Guide"* button or in APPENDIX B to this document.

AN IN-HOME SMALL GROUPS OPTION

In this scenario, teens would gather in small groups that are held off campus, in someone's home:

- Each small group has a parent host as well as small group facilitators. Adult facilitators, with the support of the host parents, will lead a small group of teens through an online video resource and facilitate discussion.
- This requires that the host home meets all of the necessary in-home guidelines and procedures outlined in the attached In Home Small Groups Guide, which includes all Safe Environment and COVID requirements. These guidelines can be found in the accompanying documents, and on the Office of Parish Support Youth Formation Page by clicking the 2020-2021 Youth Formation Guide Button.
- CYF should coordinate the small groups with hosts and mentors. This includes developing a process of assigning groups or allowing young people to "sign-up" for an in-home small group. In addition, CYFs should make sure that there are no less than 3 safe environment trained adults at the home for a night to take place. More information on the adult ratios and responsibilities can be found in the accompanying guidelines for in home small groups and on the Office of Parish Support Youth Formation Page by clicking the "2020-2021 Youth Formation Guide" button.
- This option would also include some training for host families and small group leaders so that they are equipped to facilitate in home small groups.

Additional elements that will enhance the in-home experience:

- In addition to the initial training, consider establishing some ways for ongoing support for the parents, which could include regular check-ins and encouragements from members of the team.
- Consider including time for the teens to connect with each other. Encourage opportunities within the small group setting and/or opportunities for teens to gather with a larger group as a means for fun and connection. This could include social media outreach. Examples of this can be found on the Office of Parish Support Youth Formation Page by clicking the "2020-2021 Youth Formation Guide" button or in APPENDIX A to this document.
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AN ON-SITE SMALL GROUPS OPTION

This option, which feels the most like “normal” formation, allows teens to gather on church property for small groups with mentors in which:

- Small groups are held on church property, while observing all COVID-19 guidelines. CYFs should maintain close communication with the Pastor for the most recent COVID updates or directives. All directives should be adapted to remain in accordance with any changing diocesan or state guidelines. This requires that parishes have enough space for social distanced small groups and observe maximum capacity limits.
- Consider scheduling groups to meet on different nights or at different times to adhere to distancing and capacity restrictions.
- This would require CYF to develop a process for assigning and scheduling small groups and to ensure necessary sanitization efforts are in place.

Additional elements that will enhance the on-site experience:

- Find ways to make distancing fun! Perhaps that means silly signs or markers on the floor so that teens still feel welcome among the distancing.
- Consider including time for the teens to connect with each other. Encourage opportunities within the small group setting and/or opportunities for teens to gather with a larger group as a means for fun and connection (ex: virtual or social distanced Life Night). Some fun ideas can be found on the Office of Parish Support Youth Formation Page by clicking the “2020-2021 Youth Formation Guide” Button or in APPENDIX A to this document.
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A VIRTUAL SMALL GROUPS OPTION

In the case of virtual small groups, teens would meet via Zoom or other appropriate platform in a manner such as:

- Teens would meet regularly on Zoom to watch videos and discuss with mentors or videos could be viewed independently and groups can gather virtually for discussion.
- This requires that we adhere to all for digital outreach. More detailed guidelines will be provided, but as a general rule: the same safe environment rules that apply in person should be applied online. For example: There should be at least two safe environment trained adults in every zoom meeting.
- This would require a CYF to develop a process for assigning small groups and tracking digital small group meeting times and progress.

Additional elements that will enhance the virtual experience:

- Include ongoing support for the parents, which could include regular check-ins and encouragements from members of the team as they help support their teen in engaging virtually.
- Consider opportunities for teens to gather either in person or virtually. Teens are invited and encouraged to attend these events and activities as a means for fun and connection. (Examples could include an outdoor movie night, virtual or social distanced Life Night, family picnic, zoom trivia night, or social media outreach) Some fun ideas can be found on the Office of Parish Support Youth Formation Page by clicking the *"2020-2021 Youth Formation Guide"* Button or in APPENDIX A to this document.
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- Some sample calendars, showing how these additional elements might be incorporated, can be found on the Office of Parish Support Youth Formation Page by clicking the *"2020-2021 Youth Formation Guide"* button or in APPENDIX B to this document.

POTENTIAL RESOURCES FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

The following resources are available online and could serve your young people. CYFs are encouraged to discern, with their team and pastor, which of these resources best serves the young people in each particular age group. It may also require some intentionality in discerning which sessions are being prioritized as we may not be able to present the content in its entirety. Don't forget to incorporate Circle of Grace into whatever resource you choose. Additionally, CYFs are encouraged to explore other resources and consult with OPS as we continue to develop this list.

The Emmaus Initiative | LifeTeen



- Through The Emmaus Initiative, Lifeteen has focused on providing resources, training, and support specifically created for the current needs of our time.
- Lifeteen (High School) and Edge (Middle School) resources have been adapted to include options for social distanced events as well as digital implementation. This includes social distanced social nights, games, and online ministry ideas.
- In addition, they provide weekly digital content that you could forward to parents and teens, particularly if using a virtual or homeschool model.
- Virtual conferences and resources for teams are also available.
- Website also includes a parish assessment to help determine what direction your ministry could go in this fall and what resources they can offer to help you.

Details can be found at: <https://lifeteen.com/newroad>

YDisciple | NET Ministries



- YDisciple is a toolbox teaching resources for teens AND training resources for adults, specifically designed with small groups in mind. Subscription includes video resources as well as training resources for adults and support for parents and participants.
- Parishes can purchase a subscription and share the registration links with their students OR students can(register and pay directly)

Accessible through fomed.org or visit <https://ydisciple.com> for other subscription options.

Alpha Youth Series Online | Alpha USA



- 13 episodes, each exploring a different topic about the faith. Alpha Youth Series is designed to foster connection and prompt meaningful conversation.
- Includes access to videos with built in discussion prompts, video tutorials, instructions for using zoom with Alpha and fun online games and activities.

Details can be found online at <https://alphausa.org/alpha-youth-online>

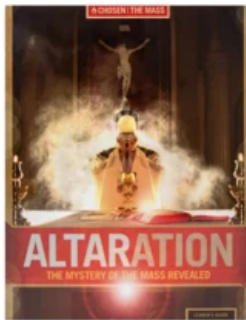
ENCOUNTER | Ascension Press



- Encounter: Experiencing God in the Everyday is an eight-part Bible study for middle school kids. In this DVD series, Mark Hart provides a compelling overview and explanation of the entire Biblical story.
- For the same cost as a student workbook, students can register for the online course. It contains all video sessions as well as discussion questions and additional resources for parents and students.
- In lieu of purchasing books, families could be provided with subscription to the online course upon registration. (Registration fee covers this cost or parishes may waive registration fees and encourage families to enroll in the online course directly.)

Details can be found at: <https://ascensionpress.com/collections/encounter-a-middle-school-bible-study>

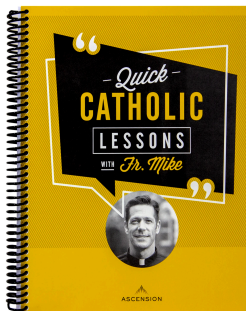
ALTARATION | Ascension Press



- AltARATION is designed to help teens come to see the Mass and the priesthood in a dramatically new way...to stir thought, create conversation, dispel myths, and inspire young souls to a deep and lasting love for the Mass.
- For the same cost as a student workbook, students can register for the online course. It contains all video sessions as well as discussion questions and additional resources for parents and students.
- In lieu of purchasing books, families could be provided with subscription to the online course upon registration. (Registration fee covers this cost or parishes may waive registration fees and encourage families to enroll in the online course directly.)

Details can be found at: <https://ascensionpress.com/collections/encounter-a-middle-school-bible-study>

Quick Catholic Lessons w/Fr. Mike | Ascension Press



- Fr. Mike Schmitz's videos on Ascension Presents prove to be an effective and engaging resource, as these videos can make topics come alive for students. They are great resources for parish ministry as they work as small-group prompts for young people.
- This leader's guide includes 15 lessons that includes prayers, outlines of Fr. Mike's presentations, discussion questions, journal prompts, and more. The guide works alongside Fr. Mike's videos found on the Ascension Presents YouTube channel.
- Free downloadable student worksheets are also available.

Details can be found at <https://ascensionpress.com/collections/quick-catholic-lessons>

PART 2

11th GRADE

CONFIRMATION PREP

SACRAMENTAL GUIDELINES

In this time of pandemic, it is recommended that candidates for Confirmation complete no less than 10 sessions. In the case of in-home or virtual preparation, we suggest the use of the attached assessment guide, which can be found in APPENDIX C of this document, to help you monitor progress and assess the readiness of the confirmandi. We recommend that two assessments take place between the teen and a priest, Coordinator of Youth Formation, or another suitable volunteer to affirm the readiness of the candidate to be confirmed. The first should occur in the middle of the program, with the second happening as preparation concludes. These assessments are not meant to serve as an oral exam, but should be conversational and relational in nature.

The attached assessment guide can also be found on the Office of Parish Support Youth Formation Page by clicking the 2020-2021 Youth Formation Guide Button.

A HOMESCHOOL OPTION

One option that we have for confirmation prep is a homeschool option in which:

- Teenagers are engaged in formation at home with their parents and/or sponsor. Using Chosen, or other appropriate online video resources, teens watch the video and discuss with their parents and/or sponsor.
- Teens are present for two personal assessments with a priest, CYF, or mentor to assess progress and determine the readiness of confirmandi. Consider ways to intentionally prepare the teens for this process so they come ready to share. Guidance for these meetings can be found in Appendix C.

Some additional elements that will enhance the homeschool experience may be:

- Include ongoing support for the parents, which could include regular check-ins and encouragements from members of the team. This may also include some initial coaching from CYF or team members on how to navigate the online resource, where to find discussion questions, or other tips for facilitating conversation at home.
- Consider opportunities for teens to gather either in person or virtually. Teens are invited and encouraged to attend these events and activities as a means for fun and connection. (Examples could include an outdoor movie night, virtual or social distanced Life Night, family picnic, zoom trivia night, or social media outreach) Examples of this can be found on the Office of Parish Support Youth Formation Page by clicking the *"2020-2021 Youth Formation Guide"* Button or in APPENDIX A to this document.
- Consider supplementing some sessions with other videos to change things up. For example, instead of the selected resource, every now and then you may watch a Fr. Mike Schmitz videos on Ascension Presents, a Fr. Brice video from our website, or even host a live Q&A with your own parish priest.
- Consider a virtual retreat! More information can be found in the resource list section.
- Some sample calendars on how this could work can be found on the Office of Parish Support Youth Formation Page by clicking the *"2020-2021 Youth Formation Guide"* button or in APPENDIX B to this document.

AN IN-HOME SMALL GROUPS OPTION

In this scenario, teens would gather in small groups that are held off campus, in someone's home:

- Each small group has a parent host as well as small group facilitators. Adult facilitators, with the support of the host parents, will lead a small group of teens through an online video resource and facilitate discussion.
- This requires that the host home meets all of the necessary in-home guidelines and procedures outlined in the attached In Home Small Groups Guide, which includes all Safe Environment and COVID requirements. These guidelines can be found in the accompanying documents, and on the Office of Parish Support Youth Formation Page by clicking the 2020-2021 Youth Formation Guide Button.
- Teens are present for two personal assessments with a priest, CYF, or mentor to assess progress and determine the readiness of confirmandi. Consider ways to intentionally prepare the teens for this process so they come ready to share. Guidance for these meetings can be found in Appendix C.
- CYF should coordinate the small groups with hosts and mentors. This includes developing a process of assigning groups or allowing young people to "sign-up" for an in-home small group. In addition, CYFs should make sure that there are no less than 3 safe environment trained adults at the home for a night to take place. More information on the adult ratios and responsibilities can be found in the accompanying guidelines for in home small groups and on the Office of Parish Support Youth Formation Page by clicking the 2020-2021 Youth Formation Guide Button.
- This option would also include some training for host families and small group leaders so that they are equipped to facilitate in home small groups.

Additional elements that will enhance the in-home experience:

- In addition to the initial training, consider establishing some ways for ongoing support for the parents, which could include regular check-ins and encouragements from members of the team.
- Consider including time for the teens to connect with each other within the small group setting and/or opportunities for teens to gather with a larger group as a means for fun and connection. This could include social media outreach. Some fun activities can be found on the Office of Parish Support Youth Formation Page by clicking the "2020-2021 Youth Formation Guide" Button or in APPENDIX A to this document.
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- Consider incorporating a virtual retreat! More information can be found below in the resources section.

AN ON-SITE SMALL GROUPS OPTION

This option, which feels the most like “normal” formation, allows teens to gather on church property for small groups with mentors in which:

- Small groups are held on church property, while observing all COVID-19 guidelines. CYFs should maintain close communication with the Pastor for the most recent COVID updates or directives. All directives should be adapted to remain in accordance with any changing diocesan or state guidelines.
- This requires that parishes have enough space for social distanced small groups and observe maximum capacity limits.
- Consider scheduling groups to meet on different nights or at different times to adhere to distancing and capacity restrictions.
- This would require CYF to develop a process for assigning and scheduling small groups and to ensure necessary sanitization efforts are in place.

Additional elements that will enhance the on-site experience:

- Find ways to make distancing fun! Perhaps that means silly signs or markers on the floor so that teens still feel welcome among the distancing.
- Consider including time for the teens to connect with each other. Encourage opportunities within the small group setting and/or opportunities for teens to gather with a larger group as a means for fun and connection (ex: virtual or social distanced Life Night, or live Q&A with the priest) Other examples can be found on the Office of Parish Support Youth Formation Page by clicking the “*2020-2021 Youth Formation Guide*” Button or in APPENDIX A to this document.
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- Teens would meet regularly on Zoom to watch videos and discuss with mentors or videos could be viewed independently and groups can gather virtually for discussion.
- Teens are present for two personal assessments with a priest, CYF, or mentor to assess progress and determine the readiness of confirmandi. Consider ways to intentionally prepare the teens for this process so they come ready to share. Guidance for these meetings can be found in Appendix C.
- This requires that we adhere to all guidelines for digital outreach. More detailed guidelines will be provided, but as a general rule: the same safe environment rules that apply in person should be applied online. For example: There should be at least two safe environment trained adults in every zoom meeting.
- This would require a CYF to develop a process for assigning small groups and tracking digital small group meeting times and progress.

Additional elements that will enhance the virtual experience:

- Include ongoing support for the parents, which could include regular check-ins and encouragements from members of the team as they help support their teen in engaging virtually.
- Consider opportunities for teens to gather either in person or virtually. Teens are invited and encouraged to attend these events and activities as a means for fun and connection. (Examples could include an outdoor movie night, virtual or social distanced Life Night, family picnic, zoom trivia night, or social media outreach) Some fun ideas can be found on the Office of Parish Support Youth Formation Page by clicking the *"2020-2021 Youth Formation Guide"* Button or in APPENDIX A to this document.
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- Consider a virtual retreat! More information can be found in the resources section. Some sample calendars, showing how these additional elements might be incorporated, can be found on the Office of Parish Support Youth Formation Page by clicking the *"2020-2021 Youth Formation Guide"* button or in APPENDIX B to this document.

POTENTIAL RESOURCES FOR CONFIRMATION PREP

The following resources are available online and could serve your young people in preparation for Confirmation. CYFs are encouraged to discern, with their team and pastor, which of these resources best serves the young people in their parish. It may also require some intentionality in discerning which sessions are being prioritized as we may not be able to present the content in its entirety. Don't forget to incorporate Circle of Grace into whatever resource you choose. Additionally, CYFs are encouraged to explore other resources and consult with OPS so

Chosen Online Course | Ascension Press



- For the same cost as a student workbook, students can register for the online course. It contains all video sessions as well as discussion questions and additional resources for parents and students
- In lieu of purchasing books, families could be provided with subscription to the online course upon registration. (Registration fee covers this cost or parishes may waive registration fees and encourage families to enroll in the online course directly.)

Details can be found at: <https://ascensionpress.com/collections/chosen-your-journey-toward-confirmation>

YDisciple | NET Ministries



- YDisciple is a toolbox teaching resources for teens AND training resources for adults, specifically designed with small groups in mind. Subscription includes video resources as well as training resources for adults and support for parents and participants.

Their Confirmation Study can be accessed by the following link: <https://www.ydisciple.tv/categories/small-group-study-confirmation>

Accessible through formed.org or visit <https://ydisciple.com> for other subscription options. (Parishes can purchase a subscription and share the registration links with their students OR students can register and pay directly)

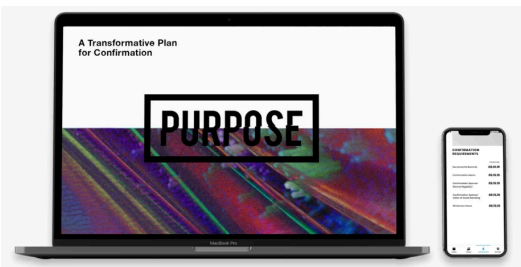
Decision Point | Dynamic Catholic



- Content is also available in the Decision Point mobile app
- Includes resources for leaders and parents

Videos and guides are accessible online at <https://dynamiccatholic.com/confirmation/program-view/>

PURPOSE | LifeTeen



- Can be used in large or small groups.
- Purpose combines impactful curriculum with a powerful digital tool to enhance communication and ease administrative tasks. It also includes with engaging supplementary material for teens and parents.

Details can be found at: <https://purposeconfirmation.com/>

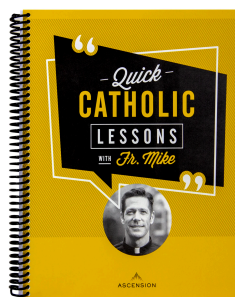
Greater | Project YM



- Greater is virtual retreat experience providing options for a 4 week or 2 day virtual retreat experience.
- The two day retreat is designed for parishes who want to take all of their teens through a simultaneous experience: including group prayer, virtual games, and frequent small group discussion sessions.
- Parishes can purchase a subscription and share the registration links with their students OR students can register and pay directly

Subscription options can be found at <https://greaterretreat.com>

Quick Catholic Lessons w/Fr. Mike | Ascension Press



- Fr. Mike Schmitz's videos on Ascension Presents prove to be an effective and engaging resource, as these videos can make topics come alive for students. They are great resources for parish ministry as they work as small-group prompts for young people.
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- Free downloadable student worksheets are also available.

Details can be found at <https://ascensionpress.com/collections/quick-catholic-lessons>

PART 3

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (GRADES 1-5)

With our younger students, we recommend primarily the homeschool or on-site option. Remember that these are suggestions, and so you have the freedom to explore other avenues for the little ones if you desire. In regards to our second graders preparing for First Communion, if you are unable to meet with them in person, consider developing a tool and strategy to assess their readiness. Similar to the assessment suggested for Confirmation, you may require two meetings throughout the year to allow for conversation with the child and to assess their readiness.

A HOMESCHOOL OPTION

One option that we have for our elementary students is a homeschool option.

- Using age appropriate resources, students are engaged in formation at home with their parents at home. Parents may be provided with traditional resources for our younger students or invited to participate in online video resources.
- CYF and team are regularly checking in with parents to assess progress and offer support and encouragement.

Additional elements that will enhance the homeschool experience:

- Include ongoing support for the parents, which could include regular check-ins and encouragements from members of the team. This may also include some initial coaching from CYF or team members on how to navigate the online resource, where to find discussion questions, or other tips for facilitating conversation at home.
- Consider opportunities to engage young people and their families. Ex: Invite families to come together for an outdoor movie night or family picnic.
- Consider offering some fun options for little ones at home. Perhaps you can provide families with some fun activities or art projects for the liturgical seasons or feast days

AN ON-SITE SMALL GROUPS OPTION

This option, which feels the most like “normal” formation, allows children to gather on church property for small groups with mentors in which:

- Groups are held on church property, while observing all COVID-19 guidelines. CYFs should maintain close communication with the Pastor for the most recent COVID updates or directives. All directives should be adapted to remain in accordance with any changing diocesan or state guidelines.
- This requires that parishes have enough space for social distanced small groups and observe maximum capacity limits.
- Consider scheduling groups to meet on different nights or at different times to adhere to distancing and capacity restrictions.
- This would require CYF to develop a process for assigning and scheduling small groups and to ensure necessary sanitization efforts are in place.

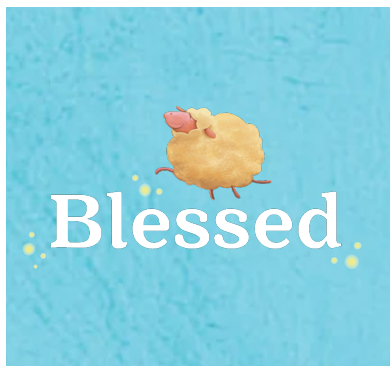
Additional elements that will enhance the on-site experience:

- Find ways to make distancing fun! Perhaps that means silly signs or markers on the floor so that teens still feel welcome among the distancing.

POTENTIAL RESOURCES FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The following resources are available online and could serve your young people. CYFs are encouraged to discern, with their team and pastor, which of these resources best serves the young people in each particular age group. Additionally, it may require some intentionality in discerning which sessions are being prioritized as we may not be able to present the content in its entirety. Don't forget to incorporate Circle of Grace into whatever resource you choose. Additionally, CYFs are encouraged to explore other resources and consult with OPS so that we may continue to grow and develop this list.

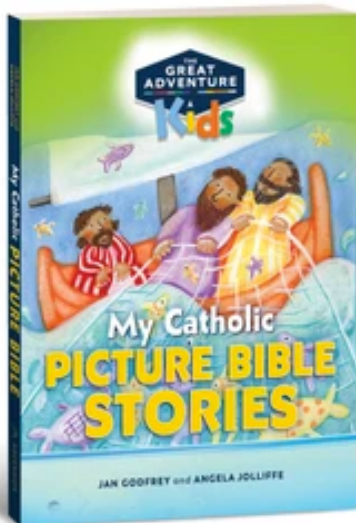
BLESSED (2nd Grade) | Dynamic Catholic



- This resource for First Communion and First Reconciliation prep meets children where they are and leads them, step-by-step, to where God is calling them to be. Blessed uses videos and workbooks to prepare children for First Communion and Reconciliation.

Details can be found at: <https://dynamiccatholic.com/blessed>

GREAT ADVENTURE KIDS | Ascension Press



- Designed for the way *kids* learn, the *Great Adventure Kids* collection is perfect for parents, teachers, grandparents, and homeschool groups—anyone who wants to give children a lasting, positive impression of the Bible and its stories, to serve as a foundation for the rest of their lives. Children learn the story of salvation history through card games, coloring books, easy to read charts, and memory beads.

Details can be found at: <https://ascensionpress.com/collections/great-adventure-kids>

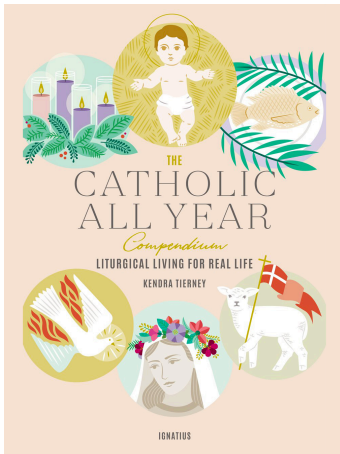
CATHOLIC BRAIN | Ascension Press



- This website offers digital resources for a variety of ages. Tools include lessons, videos, games and activities, and resources for parents and families.
- Requires a subscription

Details can be found at: <https://www.catholicbrain.com/>

CATHOLIC ALL YEAR COMPENDIUM | Ignatius Press



- This book helps parents bring the rich traditions of the Catholic Church's liturgical year into your family life
- It provides fun and creative ways to celebrate Catholic seasons and feasts –from Advent and Christmas, through Lent and Easter, to Pentecost and beyond.
- It gives ideas for stories, activities, foods, and decorations that will help you to celebrate your Catholic faith with your family and friends without expertise or much advance planning.

Details can be found at: <https://catholicallyear.com/>

In addition to the above resources provided, your current curriculum or resources can be adapted for home study if necessary.

PART 4

OUR MENTORS

AN OPTION FOR FOCUSING ON OUR MENTORS

We are in very uncertain times and many of us are still trying to find our footing. We are in times unlike any time before. If you find yourself unready for the coming year, that's ok. We're here to help. One final thing to consider is the possibility of a delayed start. This option delays the start of formation with the young people until January, as to have the fall to intentionally invest in our adult team and mentors.

There is a temptation to feel like delaying until January is somehow "leaving the children behind". If we are truly prioritizing the fall months to invest in the team, and even in the parents, we would not be leaving the children behind at all. In fact, the opposite would be true. We are investing in the things that are fundamental to the growth and formation of our young people. Perhaps the pandemic has given us time in the calendar to do so.

What would that even look like?

- The team meets regularly throughout the fall for formation
- Formation nights are designed to help the team grow in relationship with each other, in relationship with God, to pray together as a team, and to grow in confidence in ministry.
 - The Office of Parish Support will be producing video resources to help with the formation of your mentors. More information about this resource will be available soon.
 - Consider a virtual conference! LifeTeen is offering opportunities for the formation of the adults working with teens as part of their Emmaus Initiative. They will be hosting a series of webinars as well as a virtual conference. More information can be found here: <https://lifeteen.com/newroad/>
- This allows time to foster discipleship and a culture of community among your adults so that we can invite young people into that. It allows time to invest in a healthy and holy team of adults so that we can model holiness for our young people.
- Consider including a couple of times in the calendar for connection with the teens. Perhaps planning some fun nights or activities (either in person or digitally) that allow us to be in touch throughout the fall.

A FINAL WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

If you find yourself ready to go, GREAT! If you want to take time to focus your team, GREAT! If you want to implement one of the options we provided you above GREAT! If you want to use a hybrid of what you are doing now with some of the suggestions above GREAT! The most important thing is that whatever you do this fall you remember two things. First, **stay focused on the Lord**, take time to discern as a team how he is asking you to best serve your young people. Time with Him is never wasted time! Second, remember those young people you are called to serve. Remember His love for them. Share the Love he shares with you with them!

And also, remember we're in this with you. If you need anything don't hesitate to call us.

- The Office of Parish Support Team

APPENDIX A

CREATIVE WAYS TO CONNECT WITH TEENS



THE DIOCESE OF
HOUMA  THIBODAUX

Office of Parish Support

DRIVE BYS

Have some mentors pair up. Bring a couple of lawn chairs and some food to share and set up on a teen's front lawn. This can be as quick as a 5-10 minute hang out. Ask them how they're doing and what's going on in their world. You may even want to do a short devotional, bible study, or prayer. Invite multiple kids to make it even more exciting. Just be sure that parents know what's happening and are okay with it.

OUTDOOR MOVIE NIGHTS

Set up a projector on the wall of your parish hall or another building. Get speakers and have an outdoor movie night/afternoon. Make it a family event or just invite the teens. Watch something fun and provide popcorn! Team Members - man the popcorn and drink stations and use it as an opportunity to introduce yourself to parents and teens to start building relationships. When selecting a movie, maintain close communication with your Pastor and the parents to ensure age appropriate content in which everyone is comfortable.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Local nonprofits that serve the community are still looking for volunteers and have worked through COVID-19 precautions. See who you can serve with and get a group involved! As leaders, use the opportunity to build relationships with the teens as you serve alongside them.

HAND WRITTEN CARDS & NOTES

Have a calendar of people's birthdays? No? Then create one from past registration information. Mail teens a handwritten birthday card a few days before their birthday. Or don't even wait for their birthday. Everyone loves getting a letter in the mail. How cool if every teen in your youth formation group got a handwritten letter from a leader??

NETFLIX WATCH PARTY

Netflix has made it possible to stream the same show/movie at the same time as friends with a chat box to talk while watching. Choose an appropriate movie and set up a watch party.

WATCH AND DISCUSS "THE CHOSEN"

The Chosen is a brand new TV series about Jesus that's available for free on youtube. It's well done and engaging. You can get a group to watch it together (think outdoor movie nights!) or on their own and meet over Zoom or Google Meetings once a week to discuss it.

UTILIZE SOCIAL MEDIA

Use Instagram to Engage, Not Just Inform

Don't think of Instagram as a bulletin board. It's SOCIAL media, so be SOCIAL! Post pictures of teens at events and tag them. Tag teens in comments. Put up interviews with team members sharing about themselves. Keep the focus on connecting people with people, not just advertising events.

Verse or Reflection of the Day on Instagram Live

Have a set day/time when someone from the team shares a verse of scripture that inspires them and share why. Want bonus points? Get teens involved! Have a Drive By (see above) planned for a teen to be the one to share the verse/reflection. Just prep them ahead of time!

Instagram Live Q&A With The Pastor

Have your pastor on Instagram live to answer questions about the faith or for fun. Get some write in questions ahead of time (from teens or provided by you). Be sure to advertise this ahead of time! You might not have a lot of live views the first time but people can watch later. Do it a few times and keep it fun and your audience will grow!

APPENDIX B

YOUTH FORMATION CALENDARS

LOOKING AT POTENTIAL
CALENDAR OPTIONS



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The following sample calendars are designed to highlight some of the possibilities for the coming year for high school youth formation. They are not complete calendars, nor do they exhaust all that is possible or required. The desire is that they can serve as a tool to help you consider how different opportunities and elements of formation may be incorporated into the schedule. In addition to curriculum sessions, you will notice space in the calendar for things like mentor formation, digital outreach, supplementary video resources, and additional activities designed to foster connection and prayer. These are simply examples to help spark your creativity as we strive to form our young people intellectually as well as humanly, spiritually, and communally. Note that in the case of social media outreach, these events are supplementary and should be optional for all teens. While most teens maintain a social media presence, we should respect those who choose not to engage in these apps or platforms.

Additionally, as things change with Covid-19, your calendar may change as well... and that's ok! Give yourself room and permission to be adaptable and flexible with the calendar.

A GENERAL CALENDAR

The following is a general calendar that illustrates some of the many different opportunities available for high school formation. Sessions could be on-site, in-home, or virtual.

SEPTEMBER

- 6 Labor Day
- 13 Mentor Formation
- 20 Mentor Formation
- 27 Mentor Formation

OCTOBER

- 4 Mentor Formation
- 11 Fall Break
Digital outreach, create polls on Instagram to get to know your teens
- 18 Connect Activity, perhaps kick off with a social distanced social night
- 25 **Session 1 (Incorporate Circle of Grace)**

NOVEMBER

- 1 **Session 2 (Incorporate Circle of Grace)**
- 8 Mentor Formation
- 15 Watch : Fr. Mike Schmitz video:
The True Meaning of Advent
- 22 Thanksgiving Break
Digital Outreach: Instagram Live: Q&A with the pastor, CYF, or team members.
- 29 **Session 3**

DECEMBER

- 6 **Session 4**
- 13 Connect activity, perhaps something themed for Christmas
- 20 Christmas Break
Digital Outreach Instagram Live: Let's pray together!
- 27 Christmas Break

JANUARY

- 3 Mentor Formation
- 10 Connect Activity, perhaps a zoom trivia night or Life Night
- 17 *MLK*
- 24 **Session 5**
- 31 **Session 6**

FEBRUARY

- 7 Watch: Fr. Mike Schmitz:
Picking a Thing for Lent or
Fr. Brice: *Why Mardi Gras?*
- 14 Mardi Gras Break
Digital Outreach: Instagram Takeover! Invite your pastor or guest to takeover instagram for the day, sharing stories and answering questions
- 21 **Session 7**
- 28 **Session 8**

MARCH

- 7 Mentor Formation
- 14 **Session 9**
- 21 **Session 10**
- 28 Palm Sunday
Prayer Experience: Perhaps a Life Night or prayer experience +
Digital Outreach: Daily Instagram prayer prompts throughout Holy Week

APRIL

- 4 Easter
- 11 Mentor Formation
- 18 **Session 11**
- 25 **Session 12**

MAY

- 2 Connect Activity, perhaps an end of the year picnic
- 9 Mother's Day
- 16 **Mentor Formation**
Wrap up the year, recall graces

A DELAYED CALENDAR

The following is a sample calendar that reflects the possibility of a delayed start, with a fall focused on the formation of mentors.

SEPTEMBER

- 6 *Labor Day | No Formation*
- 13 Mentor Formation
- 20 Mentor Formation
- 27 Mentor Formation

OCTOBER

- 4 Connect Activity with teens,
Digital Outreach: Zoom game night
- 11 *Fall Break | No Formation*
- 18 Mentor Formation
- 25 Mentor Formation

NOVEMBER

- 1 Connect Activity with teens,
Outdoor/ drive in movie night
- 8 Mentor Formation
- 15 Mentor Formation
- 22 *Thanksgiving | No Formation*
- 29 Mentor Formation

DECEMBER

- 6 *Digital Outreach: Instagram Live: Let's pray together*
- 13 Mentor Formation
- 20 *Christmas Break | No Formation*
- 27 *Christmas Break | No Formation*

JANUARY

- 3 **Session 1 (Incorporate Circle of Grace)**
- 10 **Session 2 (Incorporate Circle of Grace)**
- 17 *MLK | No Formation*
Digital Outreach: Instagram Live Q&A
- 24 **Session 3**
- 31 Mentor Formation

FEBRUARY

- 7 **Session 4**
- 14 *Mardi Gras | No Formation*
Digital Outreach: share
Fr.Brice video, Why Mardi Gras
- 21 **Session 5**
- 28 **Session 6**

MARCH

- 7 Mentor Formation
- 14 **Session 7**
- 21 **Session 8**
- 28 *Palm Sunday*
Prayer Experience for teens

APRIL

- 4 Easter | No Formation
- 11 **Session 9**
- 18 **Session 10**
- 25 Connect Activity, perhaps an end
of the year picnic or event

MAY

- 2 Mentor Formation:
wrap up and recall graces
- 9 *Mother's Day | No Formation*

A HYBRID CALENDAR

The following is a sample calendar that reflects the possibility of a hybrid model, which combines elements of on-site formation as well as virtual or homeschool options.

SEPTEMBER

- 6 *Labor Day | No Formation*
- 13 Mentor Formation
- 20 Mentor Formation
- 27 Mentor Formation

OCTOBER

- 4 On-Site: Distanced Life Night or similar event
- 11 *Fall Break | No Formation*
Digital outreach, create polls on Instagram to get to know your teens
- 18 **Session 1** (online)* (**Incorporate Circle of Grace**)
Mentor Formation
- 25 **Session 2** (online)* (**Incorporate Circle of Grace**)
Team contacting parents with support and encouragement*

NOVEMBER

- 1 On-Site: Distanced Life Night or similar event
- 8 Mentor Formation
- 15 **Session 3** (online)*
- 22 *Thanksgiving | No Formation*
Digital Outreach: Instagram Live: Q&A with the pastor, CYF, or team members.
- 29 **Session 4** (online)*

DECEMBER

- 6 On-Site: Distanced Life Night or similar event
- 13 **Session 5** (online)*
- 20 *Christmas Break | No Formation*
Digital Outreach Instagram Live: Let's pray together!
- 27 *Christmas Break | No Formation*

JANUARY

- 3 On-Site: Distanced Life Night or similar event
- 10 **Session 6** (online)*
- 17 *MLK | No Formation*
Digital Outreach: Zoom trivia night
- 24 **Session 7** (online)*
- 31 **Session 8** (online)*

FEBRUARY

- 7 On-Site: Distanced Life Night or similar event
- 14 *Mardi Gras | No Formation*
Digital Outreach: Instagram Takeover! Invite your pastor or guest to takeover instagram for the day, sharing stories and answering questions
- 21 **Session 9** (online)*
- 28 **Session 10** (online)*

MARCH

- 7 On-Site: Distanced Life Night or similar event
- 14 **Session 11** (online)*
- 21 **Session 12** (online)*
- 28 *Palm Sunday, On-Site: Distanced Life Night or similar event*

APRIL

- 4 *Easter | No Formation*
Digital Outreach Instagram Live: Let's pray together!
- 11 On-Site: Distanced Life Night or similar event
- 18 **Session 13** (online)*
- 25 **Session 14** (online)*

MAY

- 2 On-Site: Distanced Life Night or similar event
- 9 *Mother's Day | No Formation*
- 16 Mentor Formation:
wrap up and recall graces

*While teens are engaged in online formation at home, consider scheduling monthly opportunities for ongoing mentor formation and time for mentors to be reaching out to parents for support and encouragement.

APPENDIX C

CONFIRMATION ASSESSMENT

SUPPORTING IN-HOME
SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION



THE DIOCESE OF
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Office of Parish Support

PURPOSE AND VISION

Because of the unique circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, our Youth Formation and sacramental preparation programs will look different than they have in past years. Because of the inability to gather together in large groups, many programs will involve either virtual components or totally in-home elements.

Because of these circumstances, and so that we might facilitate the most fruitful reception of sacramental grace at Confirmation, we want to ensure that our young people are sufficiently prepared to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation by their in-home preparation process. Our recommendation is that this primarily be done in two ways:

- A log of materials covered, ensuring that all topics were reviewed and discussed.
- Two one-on-one assessment meetings with a priest, Coordinator of Youth Formation, or other suitable volunteer to affirm the readiness of the candidate to be confirmed. The first will happen in the middle of the program, and the second will happen at the end.

The intention of these assessment meetings is not to be a “test” the candidate has to pass, nor is it intended to prevent people from being confirmed. Through these conversations, our goal is to help the candidate further integrate what was learned and help make it more applicable to their lives. It is important to be mindful that it is essential to the growth of faith that confirmandi be given the freedom to have questions and a space to ask them. It is often through relationship and conversation that we have the most profound impacts with the Lord.

ASSESSING READINESS

We cannot provide a comprehensive assessment that fits each parish because of the diversity of Confirmation preparation programs. Different parishes will be using different programs and curricula to prepare their young people. However, there are certain topics particular to the Sacrament of Confirmation that can be discussed across any program used.

We want to stress the importance of the conversational and relational nature of these assessments. This is not an oral exam, but rather a conversation with a mentor to see how the candidate sees God working in his or her life and why he or she desires to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

BEFORE THE MEETING

In preparation for the assessment meeting, you may want to tell the candidates in advance of their first meeting to come ready to share:

- A little about themselves
- Three or four things they learned or found most interesting from the videos
- Three or four questions they have: these could be questions about the Sacrament or in general about God, the faith, prayer, etc. It's their chance to ask any question they have!

The way you prepare your teens for these meetings will greatly impact the fruitfulness of the meeting. Please contact the Office of Parish Support if you would like further coaching on how to prepare your teens for these assessment meetings.

ASSESSING THE HUMAN DIMENSION

The natural flow would begin with the "human" elements to get to know the candidate. The following areas of conversation can be discussed to help form and develop an authentic relationship between the candidate and the mentor:

- Family life - brothers and sisters? Family dynamics (who lives at home, etc), What do your parents do? Etc.
- Social - School? Sports teams? Clubs? Hobbies? Etc.
- 'Check in' about how COVID has affected them. (Greatest blessing and greatest challenge)
- Anything else that naturally comes up in conversation... this is the time to really let them see your genuine interest in them and what's important to them.

ASSESSING THE SPIRITUAL AND SACRAMENTAL DIMENSION

The conversation should eventually move to speaking about the candidate's spiritual life and understanding of the sacrament of Confirmation. The following topics are areas that can be discussed:

- Explore with the teen someone they know that is living with Jesus at the center of their life.
 - Have them share some examples of how this person shows this.
- The candidate's relationship with God in daily life
- Their relationship with the Holy Spirit and how He is active in their life
 - Related to this, their understanding of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit
- Their understanding of their mission as confirmed Catholics, such as:
 - How they can bear witness to the faith in their own lives?
 - How they can make disciples of their families or friends?
 - What will Confirmation empower them to do?
- Anything they learned or found particularly interesting from going through the program.
- Any particular questions that arose through the program

Here are some questions to help facilitate the this part of the conversation:

- What is the sacrament of Confirmation?
- What happens to someone who is confirmed?
- Why do you want to be confirmed?
- Did anything particularly stand out to you from the program?
- Did you disagree with anything? Or What questions that arose as you went through the program?
- What can you do differently to bear witness to the faith in your own life?
- What will you do to keep learning about the faith or deepening your relationship with God?
- Which of these the following statements can you relate to?
 - I need help believing God can be an active part of my life.
 - I need help learning how to pray.
 - I have lots of questions.. I need someone who I can talk to about those questions.



Madonna and Child
By Sandro Botticelli