



ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

September 13, 2018

Dear Catechetical Leaders:

Blessings to all of you as you begin an exciting new year with the mission of *Enlisting Witnesses to Jesus Christ*. (2018 Catechetical theme) It is also an opportune time to update you on the progress of our Faith Formation study and the work that has been accomplished by Andrea Slaven, Andrea Schaffer, Theresa May and Marge Babcock- the Diocesan Faith Formation Team.

As background, in September 2017 I sent a letter to all of the Catechetical Leaders to announce the decision by the Strategic Planning Committee to conduct a study of faith formation in our diocese as part of the overall strategic plan. The purpose of the study was to provide information to guide diocesan leadership in planning to meet the evangelization and catechetical needs of individuals and parishes.

Hezel Associates, an independent research and evaluation firm, was hired to conduct the study. The objectives of the study were to: 1) explore faith formation at the parish level; 2) identify ways the Office of Faith Formation can best support parishes; and 3) identify promising practices occurring within the diocese. The research was designed to learn from stakeholders and take a bottom up approach to planning by gathering input from those directly involved in delivering faith formation in parishes.

The study included questionnaires for Catechetical Leaders and pastors, focus groups with CLs, and follow up interviews with CLs. A review of the literature was also done in order to identify emerging promising practices.

I would like to thank those of you who participated in the survey, the focus groups and/or follow up phone calls. Participation among CLs was excellent with 86 responding (73%). 46 of 120 pastors responded (38%) to the survey. You can read the Executive Summary at <https://syracusediocese.org/offices/faith-formation/>.

The report has been reviewed by the Faith Formation staff and will be reviewed with the Strategic Planning Committee later this month for their input. Not surprising, at a very broad level, the study found that faith formation across the diocese is undergoing a time of transition as people practice the faith differently than in the past and the family dynamic has changed.

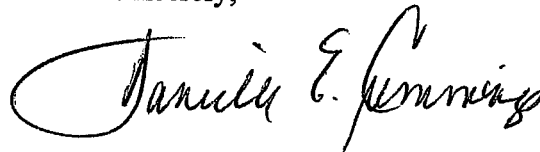
Upon reflection and further discussion with me regarding the survey, the Faith Formation team has been working diligently on three areas: 1) Improved and enhanced catechetical training/certification that meets the needs and availability of the catechists 2) research on assessments for faith formation that correlate to the curriculum used at the individual parishes 3) Models of family catechesis that work using research from around the country. The team will

bring their initial work to a committee to be made up of CLs and pastors for input and recommendations. The team will also continue being available to area catechetical leaders and continuing the work with the Office of Evangelization and the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry on the pilot program.

In the meantime, one of the issues raised in the survey was fear that the Faith Formation community has lost its voice at the diocesan level because of the absence of a Diocesan Director. Let me assure you that the voice of Faith Formation is very present. In most cases, it is now four voices who are asked to be present at meetings at the diocesan level instead of one! The team will continue its work on the three areas mentioned above as well as be available to all of you. Their work and efforts, along with the input of pastors and CLs will help shape final recommendations of the study.

I know it has been a lengthy process but it is important work. I am grateful to the Faith Formation team and to all of you for your participation in the survey and your anticipated participation in further conversations. Most of all, I am grateful for your leadership and your witness to Jesus Christ.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danielle E. Cummings". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "D".

Danielle E. Cummings
Chancellor/Director of Communications