

Email to students, alumni and auditors

DATE: July 6, 2020; 4:00 pm

SUBJECT: Big news about Biblical/Catechetical Schools' 2020-2021 classes

Dear students,

Happy belated Independence Day! I hope it was very celebratory and spent with close family members and friends!

Really quickly, I want to seriously encourage everyone to check out our summer **Short Course** with Mr. Daniel Campbell, entitled, "The Interior Life: An Introduction to the Life of Prayer," to be offered in online format on Tuesdays (9:00a-11:00a or 7:00p-9:00p; July 21-Aug 25) and Thursdays (9:00a-11:00a or 7:00p-9:00p; July 23-Aug 27). If you ever wanted to better understand the importance of the life of prayer, this is the class for you!! And because it's online and only runs six weeks, anyone anywhere can take it. Click [HERE](#) for more information and to register.

Now, regarding the biggest news of the summer, I want to update everyone with our plans for the 2020-2021 academic year and candidly explain the reasons for it.

The past few months have been strange and difficult for everyone as our nation and state have tried to handle the COVID-19 health crisis. I hope that our entire Lay Division family has been healthy and safe during this time. All of our students, past and present, remain in our prayers. Unfortunately, the battle is far from over and our government and ecclesial leaders are constantly trying to balance the response. This next year will still be fraught with uncertainty, inconsistency, and unpredictability for many reasons. This makes things extremely difficult for the Lay Division to plan and manage 75 classes at 66 locations all across Colorado -- from Fort Collins in the north to Colorado Springs in the south, and from Glenwood Springs in the west to Sterling in the east. As one can imagine, there will be, and still are even now, many diverse variations on policies, restrictions, and expectations (such as class sizes, social distancing, mask requirements, sanitation procedures, etc.) from county to county, district to district, and parish to parish that will certainly still be in force and ever changing before, during and after the sick season. Not only is this a logistical nightmare, but it will negatively impact the learning environment for our students.

Because of this, we've carefully decided to temporarily move our classes 100% online for the 2020-2021 year (Biblical School, Catechetical School and Enrichment Programs). This is not our preferred educational method, because our mission is on-site, live instruction at parishes with quality interaction and engagement with the instructor, healthy fellowship amongst students, and common prayer together. Many other Catholic educational institutions do a great job providing various courses online, but that is not us. We are definitely planning to return to parishes for the 2021-2022 year, so this temporary change will not be the "new normal" for the Lay Division. We're making this decision now, mid-summer, to get ahead of the situation and make the best possible decision with all the information currently at hand. The goal is to provide a reliable and consistent experience for our students, no matter what happens throughout the duration of the academic year.

As far as moving to a hybrid solution of launching some classes on-site and some online, we believe that such an approach will also prove problematic from many angles: (1) Many live classes might get cancelled from poor attendance, because students might not feel safe to return to class just yet, (2) We don't have the budget to pay instructors for additional online courses, and (3) We wouldn't be able to provide a consistent instructional experience, etc. Besides all that, it still doesn't address the logistical issues I described above, because we'd still have to deal with the mixed policies and restrictions from location to location.

Therefore, it's best to go online temporarily for one year. I'm convinced that despite the disappointment of not being able to spend time together in person at your parishes, it will prove to be a very fruitful and exciting year. We have a plan that will keep everyone safe while minimizing health risks, and students can still dive deep into the faith through our live instruction, and the house will stand firm no matter how much the storm rages outside.

Now, here are some quick FAQs that should be helpful:

- **Will classes return to parishes?** Yes, our plan is to plop all continuing classes right back into their host parishes for the 2021-2022 year. Our hope is to be online no longer than one year.
- **Will there still be information sessions this summer for new classes?** Yes, we are still offering our information sessions live in parishes this summer wherever and however we can. Since they are usually smaller groups, there should be no problem there. In addition, we will also offer some information sessions online before classes begin. The days and times will be announced soon. Please check our website regularly to see if any information sessions get cancelled.
- **How will the classes be taught online?** All of our classes will be taught live by one of our instructors. There will not be pre-recorded sessions that are emailed to students like the final weeks of last year's classes.
- **Are there many day/time options to choose from?** Yes!
 - *Biblical/Catechetical School:* Biblical and Catechetical School classes will have a morning and evening session on Monday through Thursday each week (no Super Saturday sessions and no CBS 4 on Wednesday evenings). So, it'll be easy to attend whatever day/time is best for you! If you miss your usual "class time" in a week, you can make up the lesson at another time that week.
 - *Enrichment Courses:* Enrichment Classes will be on our schedule! As originally planned months ago, we will be offering the following: *Apologetics* (4 sessions), *Dante's Divine Comedy* (1 session), *Icon: Catholic Art & Culture* (1 session), and our newest class, *The Wisdom of the Saints* (2 sessions).
- **What about small groups for Biblical/Catechetical classes?** We will certainly encourage small groups by providing break-out sessions in the online format and even encouraging folks to meet in small groups on their own at the parish or in their homes. This will only be encouraged, but not required this year.
- **What if I don't want to take the class online?** For those who might not want to take class online this year, they can take a break and pick up where they left off at a parish near them in the future.
- **What about required/optional books and the Student Workbooks for Biblical/Catechetical classes?** We're still figuring this out. We'll send out an email to registered students as soon as we finalize a plan regarding books.
- **Can people outside Colorado take the classes?** Because we are only temporarily offering classes online and hope to return to parishes in the fall of 2021, we are limiting enrollment for this year to in-state students only. However, because our Enrichment Courses are only one year long and will finish by spring 2021, out-of-state people are more than welcome to sign up for an Enrichment Course!
- **Is tuition the same this year?** Because our instructors are still teaching classes live, grading assignments, and engaging with students as much as possible, we will keep the current tuition.

In conclusion, one of the major benefits of offering our classes online for this year, is that anyone in Colorado who has been interested in the Biblical or Catechetical Schools but hasn't been able to join, can now try it out this year and experience the incredible instruction we offer. So, please spread the word to your friends and family, as many folks would be thrilled to try it out online for one year, then continue at a parish location near them in the future.

Thank you very much for your understanding. This has been a difficult decision to make, especially because it has required us to make temporary layoffs in our part-time faculty, but we feel it is the best one. As always, God will bless our classes and draw much good from the situation. As we do every year, we're asking people to volunteer at information



sessions and to sign up for prayer slots each day for the safety of our students and the success of our enrollment season. Now, more than ever, we need prayer warriors to come to our aid. Click on the links below to see where you can help out:
[Help at Information Session](#)
[Pray Holy Hour/Rosary for successful enrollment](#)

In the Sacred Heart,
Dr. Nicholas Lebish