

Catholic Religious Education in the Home

Policy No. 2006-04

Policy Statement

In response to the number of Catholic families choosing to provide all or part of their children's education at home, Catholic educators and pastoral leaders call upon parishes to reach out in welcome to home-schooling families, to help contribute to the educational integrity of their catechetical activities, and include them in pastoral and sacramental activities and ministries of the parishes.

Recommended: 01/10/2005 by the Archdiocesan Education Commission

Ratified: 01/12/06 by Most Rev. Daniel M. Buechlein, OSB, Archbishop of Indianapolis

Administrative Rules

Role and Responsibilities: The Archdiocese of Indianapolis recognizes the roles and duties of each of the partners involved in Catholic Religious Education in the home:

1. **Parents:** Parents, who are the first to communicate the faith to their children through their example and through formal instruction, have the primary responsibility for the education of their children. The *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) are clear about the role of parents in the catechesis of their young children:
 - *The family as the origin or “locus” of catechesis has a unique privilege: transmitting the Gospel by rooting it in the context of profound human values (GDC, #255).*
 - *The witness of Christian life given by parents in the family comes to children with tenderness and parental respect...It is deepened all the more when parents comment on the more methodical catechesis which their children later receive in the Christian community and help them to appropriate it (GDC, #226 and CT, #68).*
 - *The Catechism of the Catholic Church states “The home is the natural environment for initiating a human being into solidarity and communal responsibilities” (CCC, # 2224).*

[See also *Code of Canon Law* [CL], 226, 796, and 1136]

Therefore, since each family situation is unique, parents have a responsibility to:

- Meet with the pastor or his designee to develop a suitable plan for home catechesis.
- Follow the policies and guidelines of the archdiocese and parish in regard to preparation for reception of the sacraments.
- Make every effort to contact the pastor, parish life coordinator (PLC) or their designee in a timely manner about proximate preparation for reception of a sacrament.

2. **The Parish Church as Community:** At baptism, the parish community promises to assist parents in their role of handing on the faith. The Church is a universal community of believers. Through the sacrament of baptism each of us becomes an integral part of the wider Roman Catholic Christian family of God. Deriving from this reality, participation in liturgical, catechetical, and sacramental activities of the parish is an expectation that flows naturally from the communal nature of the Catholic Church. The GDC and the CCC also emphasize the importance and value of the parish:
- *The Christian community is the origin, “locus”, and “goal of catechesis” (GDC, #253).*
 - *The parish is, without a doubt, the most important locus in which Christian community is formed and expressed (GDC, #257).*
 - *The parish is the Eucharistic community and the heart of the liturgical life of Christian families; it is also a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents (CCC, #2226).*

Therefore, the parish has to *right* to:

- Request that the parents register with the parish faith formation or religious education program so that home-schooled children will be included in all communications about parish activities and programs.
- Request some record of student progress. (Archdiocesan guidelines require a minimum of 30 clock hours of religious instruction per year in faith formation programs.) This record would enable a family to transfer official documentation of the child’s progress to another parish or school, if needed.

The parish also has a *duty* to:

- Provide information concerning the faith formation activities which involve all the children of the parish.
- Give families suitable notice regarding particular parish guidelines for sacramental preparation.
- Inform the family of the applicable sections of the archdiocesan guidelines for sacraments, especially the criteria for readiness.

3. **The Pastor:** The pastor or parish life coordinator (PLC), by virtue of their office, *is bound to provide* for the catechetical formation of adults, young people and children...and is entrusted by the bishop to make provision for sacramental preparation. Canon 777 states that the pastor or PLC is to be attentive to the norms established by the diocesan bishop and to take care in a special way:

1. *That suitable catechesis is imparted for the celebration of the sacrament.*
2. *That through catechetical instruction imparted for an appropriate period of time, children are prepared properly for the first reception of the sacraments of penance and reconciliation, Holy Eucharist, and confirmation.*
3. *That having received first communion, these children are enriched more fully and deeply through catechetical formation.*
4. *That catechetical instruction is also given to those who are physically or mentally impaired, insofar as their condition permits.*
5. *That the faith of youth and adults is strengthened, enlightened, and developed through various means and endeavors.*

Therefore, it is the *right and responsibility* of the pastor, PLC or their designee to:

- Make parents and their children aware of the activities and ministries available to all children in the parish (such as children’s choir, altar servers, formation, social events, etc.) and invite and encourage their active participation
- Make available to parents appropriate catechetical materials including the scope-and-sequence and age-appropriate sections of the *Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guide*.

4. **The Bishop and the Church Magisterium:** The magisterium or teaching authority of the Church is the guarantor of the soundness and completeness of Catholic doctrine and practice. Catechesis is the work of the whole Church. There is no authentically Catholic way to teach except in union with the Pope and the local bishop through his pastors, parish life coordinators and designated assistants. The Church commissions bishops and pastors to take seriously their obligation to ensure that the authentic Gospel message is taught, and that private interpretation of doctrine can never supersede the legitimate teaching authority of the Church.

- The Bishops are “beyond all others the ones primarily responsible for catechesis and catechists par excellence” (CT, 63b).
- It is the responsibility of the diocesan bishop to issue norms concerning catechesis and make provision that suitable instruments of catechesis are available (CL, 775, GDC, 222-223).

The Office of Catholic Education: The Archdiocese of Indianapolis Office of Catholic Education supports the mission of the archbishop in his role as teacher and catechetical leader ensuring the teaching of the Catholic Faith within the archdiocesan schools, parishes and homes. Such support extends to pastors and their designees through the development of guidelines and policies and by giving assistance to schools and parishes in the development and enhancement of authentic instructional programs in keeping with the cultural diversity in the population of the archdiocese.

Archdiocesan Faith Formation Staff: The professional staff supports pastors and parents in fulfilling their catechetical home-schooling responsibilities, by providing and fostering Christian discipleship and an awareness of belonging to and being connected with the larger Catholic Church community. They also support parish-based home religious education by providing:

- Archdiocesan policies and guidelines for preparation for and reception of the sacraments.
- *Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guides* for youth and adults.
- Lists of those religion textbooks found to be in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.
- Catechist formation guidelines and formation opportunities to assure that all catechists are teaching in conformity with the magisterium of the church.

- A list of recommended resources for home-schoolers:
In addition to a current *Catholic Study Bible*, it is recommended that Catholic home school libraries contain and that parents be familiar with at least the following Church documents:
 1. The *General Directory for Catechesis*
 2. The *National Directory for Catechesis*
 3. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
 4. Documents of Vatican II
 5. *Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guides* for youth and adults

The parish administrator of religious education and youth minister can provide detailed information about textbooks, church documents, and other resources available to Catholic home-schooling families.

Catholic Schools and Home-Schooling:

Principals will accept the decision of Catholic parents to home school their children and encourage the children to become involved with their parish or school in the following ways:

- **Activities:** In relation to a school, home-schooled children should be treated like other children from the parish religious education program in regard to any after school recreational activities.
 - ⊕ Activities during the school day, (i.e. classes, school trips, school service activities, etc.) are supported by tuition payments and are for fully enrolled students and are not required to be open to parish children who are not enrolled in the school.
 - ⊕ After school activities such as sports teams, science fairs, clubs, etc. sponsored by the school for its students are not required to be open to parish children who are not enrolled in the school (Note: CYO activities are parish-based and open to the children of all registered parishioners).
- **State Testing:** Decisions about whether home-schooled children will be allowed to participate in programs such as the state testing program (ISTEP+) and the Archdiocesan Faith 2000 religion assessment program should be made by the principal at the local level.
- **Curriculum:** Archdiocesan religion curriculum is available for downloading on the Office of Catholic Education Website www.archindy.org/OCE/ (Our Curriculum).
- **Transferring into the school:** Principals should follow the same guidelines as the public schools in regard to transferring from a home school to a Catholic school setting. When transferring:
 - ⊕ Costs of validating student placement will be at the expense of the family.
 - ⊕ The final determination of student placement and recognition of schoolwork done in the home school is solely at the discretion of the principal and established school policy.

Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) and Home-Schooling

The children of all home-schooling parish families are welcome to participate in all CYO sports and other activities.

*Promulgated: 01/19/06 by Annette M. Lentz,
Executive Director, Catholic Education and Faith Formation*

Application

Applies to all programs and schools under the Secretariat for Catholic Education and Faith Formation.

History/Rationale

This policy was developed after consultation at the parish, school and agency level and in response to the growing number of home-schooling families in the state and archdiocese.

A time-honored tradition within the Catholic Church is the “handing on” of the faith in the home by parents through their example and instruction of their children. Catholic schools and parish faith formation or religious education programs came into existence to assist families in their responsibility for the education of their children. Catholic school and parish religious education programs are offered in many forms and varieties that most parents find suitable for the faith growth and development of their children.

Some parents choose to provide religious instruction and sacramental preparation at home. Those who do so have a sacred obligation to guide their children in the light of the magisterial teachings of the church.

Catechesis, an esteemed term in Catholic Christian tradition, aims to make a person’s faith become living, conscious and active, through the light of instruction. While striving to enrich the faith life of individuals at their particular stages of development, every form of catechesis is oriented in some way to the catechesis of adults, who are capable of a full response to God’s word. Catechesis is a lifelong process for the individual and a constant, concerted pastoral activity of the Catholic Christian community (*Sharing the Light of Faith*, #32).

Policy Guidance

Partnership: *The family is the primary but not the only or exclusive educating community (John Paul II, On the Family, #36)* and therefore, parents are encouraged to form partnerships with all who serve the ministry of catechesis. The *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) and these guidelines affirm the roles of each of the partners in the catechetical mission: parents, parish, pastor and delegates, and the bishop. Together they form a partnership with the responsibility for forming children in the four pillars of the Catholic faith: creed, sacraments, Christian life, and prayer. This partnership requires communication between bishops, pastors and their designees, and parents, so that all can take responsibility and offer the quality of leadership needed to carry out the catechetical mission of the Church.

All local policies and communications with home-schooling families in light of this policy should be guided by two principles:

- As partners in faith formation, parishes, school, and home-schooling families strive to collaborate in all appropriate areas.
- Each partner should be treated with hospitality, respect and Christian charity.

NOTE: All promulgated AEC Policies are posted at www.archindy.org/oce/ (Member Area).