



# ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON

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Vicar General  
and Moderator of the Curia

August 15, 2013

Dear Brother Priest,

Parish catechetical programs for adults, youth, and children are an essential element of our common mission to teach the faith as part of the New Evangelization. I am writing to provide you with a copy of the recently promulgated "Policies for Parish Catechesis" which govern catechesis for adults, youth, and children in the Archdiocese of Washington.

These policies are the result of extensive consultation with pastors, clergy, catechetical and other parish leaders, and the archdiocesan Religious Education Advisory Board. During the spring comment period almost 100 changes were made as a result of input received from stakeholders. The document reflects the policy updates in the areas of catechist certification, human resources, liturgical norms, and Catholic schools made over the past five years, and it replaces the "Policies and Regulations for Parish Catechesis" of 1999. The policies have received support from the Priest Council.

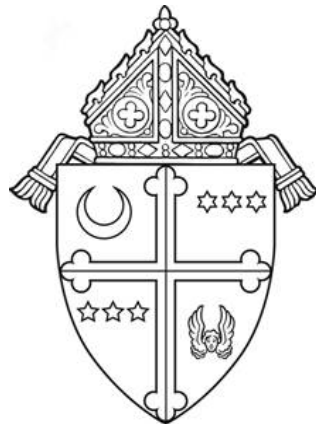
New in this document is a section (Appendix C) which is titled, "Catholic Religious Education in the Home: A Policy Statement of the Archdiocese of Washington for Homeschooling Families." This Appendix can be printed and utilized as a separate stand-alone document for homeschooling families in your parish.

These "Policies for Parish Catechesis" become effective September 1, 2013. It is my hope they will assist you and all involved in parish catechesis to further achieve the goal of helping Catholics know the faith, live it with confidence, and share it with others. If you have questions please contact Sara Blauvelt, Director for Catechesis (tel: 301-853-5368).

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout  
Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia

**POLICIES**  
**for**  
**PARISH CATECHESIS**



ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON

**2013**

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## DECREE

To the Pastors, Parish Catechetical Leaders, and all those responsible for Parish Religious Education in the Archdiocese of Washington:

It is my pleasure to approve and promulgate the Policies for Parish Catechesis within the Archdiocese of Washington. The policies govern catechesis for adults, youth and children.

These Policies for Parish Catechesis become effective on September 1, 2013. The policies replace any prior policies concerning parish catechesis in the Archdiocese of Washington.

It is my hope that these policies will assist all involved in religious education in our parishes and schools to achieve our mutual goal of providing catechesis for the New Evangelization through life-long conversion.

Given this fifteenth day of August two thousand and thirteen in the Archdiocese of Washington.

Archbishop of Washington

Chancellor



## 1000 THE VISION AND PURPOSE OF PARISH CATECHESIS

"At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a person, the person of Jesus of Nazareth" (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 5).

The *General Directory for Catechesis* states: "The aim of catechetical activity consists in precisely this: to encourage a living, explicit and fruitful profession of faith. The Church, in order to achieve this, transmits to catechumens and those to be catechized, her living experience of the Gospel, her faith, so that they may appropriate and profess it" (*General Directory for Catechesis*, 66).

Catechesis for the New Evangelization seeks lifelong conversion. It aims to invite people beyond a one-time or initial conversion into a gradual and lifelong process of conversion. This process seeks to draw all people into a deeper relationship with God through their participation in the sacramental life of the Church, development of a mature conscience; sustainment of faith through ongoing catechesis, and integration of faith into all aspects of their lives. Catechists are not merely teachers, but witnesses of faith who foster a culture of faith. Careful pastoral planning should develop catechetical experiences that are distinct, yet complimentary, and aim to renew the faith of all Catholics, including missing brothers and sisters (cf. *Disciples Called to Witness*, IV). Therefore, catechesis for the New Evangelization has a kerygmatic dimension, aimed at bringing about conversion as well as ongoing learning and faith formation. The kerygmatic nature of catechesis in the New Evangelization maintains continuity between first proclamation and catechesis which instructs in the deposit of the faith. Catechesis is the responsibility of the whole Church.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines *catechesis* as "an education in the faith of children, young people and adults which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life" (5).

These policies shall be read in conjunction with and in light of all other policies of the Archdiocese of Washington. All parish catechetical programming must comply with the Archdiocese of Washington *Child Protection Policy*.

### 1100 Six Fundamental Tasks of Catechesis

Catechesis for adults, youth and children shall include formation in the six fundamental tasks of catechesis (cf. *General Directory for Catechesis*, 85-86):

1. **Promoting knowledge of the faith:** Introduces disciples to a knowledge of Tradition, Scripture, and the Creed which is the compendium of the faith of the Church.
2. **Liturgical education:** Leads to the celebration of the salvific presence of Jesus in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.

"The duties of catechesis correspond to education of the different dimensions of faith, for catechesis is integral Christian formation, 'open to all the other factors of Christian life.' In virtue of its own internal dynamic, the faith demands to be known, celebrated, lived and translated into prayer" (*GDC*, 84).

3. **Moral formation:** Transmits the attitudes of Jesus Christ which leads the disciple to undertake a journey of interior transformation rooted in the spirit of the Beatitudes.
4. **Teaching to pray:** Fosters communion with Jesus, teaching prayer with the same sentiments with which he turned to the Father: adoration, praise, thanksgiving, filial confidence, supplication and awe for his glory.
5. **Education for community life:** Prepares the Christian to live in community and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church.
6. **Missionary initiative:** Seeks to equip the disciples of Jesus to be present as Christians in society through their professional, cultural and social lives.

The six tasks of catechesis provide the structure for *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guide*. This archdiocesan religion curriculum guide highlights the strong relationship between the pillars of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the key elements of Catholic life so as to help disciples realize the intimate connection between our Catholic faith and life. As such, the curriculum guide provides the foundation of parish catechetical programs for adults, youth and children.

## 1200 Comprehensive Formation

Catechetical formation should be thoroughly comprehensive in its presentation of the truths of Catholic doctrine and moral life.

Comprehensive formation:

- A. Enlightens faith;
- B. Directs the heart toward God;
- C. Fosters participation in the liturgy;
- D. Inspires apostolic activity; and
- E. Nurtures a life in accord with the spirit of Christ.

## 1300 Catechesis is Lifelong

Every baptized believer, regardless of age or circumstance, has a right to receive a lifelong education in the faith. This catechesis, which leads to and flows from prayer and worship, finds its most vital expression within the context of the local community of faith (*General Directory of Catechesis*, 60).

"Depending on the size and scope of the parish catechetical program, parishes should allocate their resources so that they are able to acquire the services of a competent and qualified catechetical leader (or someone in the process of becoming qualified and competent) or to share those services with another parish" (*NDC*, 54, B5).

### **1310 Parishes Shall Provide Regular and Systematic Catechesis for Adults, Adolescents and Children**

Growth in faith relates to human development and passes through stages. Effective catechesis "must take into consideration all the human factors of a particular age level in order to present the Gospel message in a vital and compelling way" (*National Directory for Catechesis*, 48). Religious truths shall be presented in greater depth as the capacity for understanding grows.

### **1400 Communion with Local Church**

All catechetical programs shall reflect the local Church. It is the responsibility of catechetical leaders to communicate, consult and collaborate with all involved parties, particularly the appropriate archdiocesan offices, in an effort to ensure communion with the local Church.

### **1500 Catechetical Materials**

All catechetical materials shall accurately reflect the full content of the faith and be aligned with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. A list of approved textbooks for use in catechetical programs for children and youth can be found at the archdiocesan website:

<http://site.adw.org/catechetical-textbook>.

Recommendations for resources for use with all ages can be obtained by calling the Office for Catechesis.

"Catechetical materials, taken as a whole, need to promote a healthy and vital Catholic identity in such a way that the believer hears the message clearly, lives it with conviction, and shares it courageously with others" (*Guidelines for Doctrinally Sound Catechetical Materials*, p. 9).

### **1600 Roles and Responsibilities in Catechesis**

Catechesis is the work and responsibility of the whole Church, but the Church's members have different responsibilities (cf. *Catechesi Tradendae*, 16).

#### **1610 Role of the Archbishop**

Ordained as a successor of the Apostles, the Archbishop bears the responsibility for interpreting the Word of God and for handing on the authentic teachings of the Church. As the chief catechist of the archdiocese, the Archbishop has the ultimate authority and responsibility in all matters pertaining to catechesis/religious education.<sup>1</sup> By word and example, he calls the People of God to lifelong learning and holiness. With the assistance of the auxiliary bishops, the Archbishop exercises his teaching office in archdiocesan parishes and schools through pastors. Pastors and their designated catechetical leaders are supported by the Office for Catechesis.

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<sup>1</sup> Can. 775 §1 It is the responsibility of the diocesan bishop to issue norms concerning catechetics and to make provisions that suitable instruments of catechesis are available.

## **1620 Role of the Secretary for Education**

The Secretary shall be responsible for the Catholic Schools Office and Office for Catechesis. The secretary for Catholic education shall be appointed by, and responsible to, the Archbishop and assist him in his teaching ministry by providing service and leadership to parish religious education programs and Catholic schools.

## **1630 Role of the Archdiocesan Director for Catechesis**

The Director for Catechesis shall be responsible to the Archbishop for the oversight of all parish catechetical programs in the archdiocese. The Director leads the Office for Catechesis and provides consultation, resources and support to pastors and parish catechetical leaders. The Director also serves as the ex-officio chairperson of the executive committee of the Archdiocesan Catechetical Leaders Association (ACLA).

## **1640 Role of the Pastor**

The pastor is the chief catechist of the parish and has overall responsibility for the teaching of the faith through all parish programs. He shall ensure that sufficient resources are available for effective catechesis. The pastor shall appoint parish catechetical leaders as appropriate to oversee and implement parish catechetical programs. The pastor, parish priests and deacons give practical support to catechetical programs by participating in parish catechetical events, special liturgies and planning efforts.

## **1650 Role of the Catechetical Leader**

The parish catechetical leader, under the leadership of and in close collaboration with the pastor, shall assess the catechetical needs of the parish and design and implement programs to meet their needs so that the faith is effectively taught to adults, youth and children.

The parish catechetical leader, supported by the Office for Catechesis, utilizes the resources of the Office as appropriate and in accord with policy.

The Archdiocese of Washington recognizes three levels of Catechetical Leadership: Director of Religious Education; Coordinator of Religious Education and Volunteer Coordinator of Religious Education (though other titles may be used). Each designation is determined primarily by the duties performed and the competencies required to

"The apostolic work of the catechist springs from the Sacrament of Baptism through which all believers come to share in the prophetic ministry of Christ and the evangelizing mission of the Church. It is strengthened by the Sacrament of Confirmation. The catechist responds to this interior call, the voice of the Holy Spirit. His or her commissioning by the Church through the local Bishop is a divine calling, a call to holiness which has a particular urgency. Their personal relationship with Jesus Christ energizes their service to the Church and provides the continuing motivation, vitality and force of their catechetical activity" (*National Directory of Catechesis*, 54, 8).

accomplish them. See Appendix A for further details of required competencies for each designation.

### **1660 Role of the Coordinator of Youth Ministry**

As catechetical leaders both serving the mission of the parish, the catechetical leader and the coordinator of youth ministry must work together. The pastor may determine the structure of the shared responsibility.

### **1670 Role of the Catechist**

Together with priests and deacons, parish catechists serve as co-workers with the Archbishop in the ministry of the Word. Catechists give witness to the faith of the Church by instructing people of all ages: adults, families, children, adolescents and those with special needs (cf. *Looking to Christ in Faith*, p 27).

### **1680 Role of Catechetical Staff and Catechists**

All parish staff and volunteers involved in parish catechesis shall uphold the teachings of the Church and act in ways that promote the best interests of the Church and do not violate the principles or tenets of the Catholic faith. They shall adhere to the Catholic faith, teaching and moral discipline, and shall not contradict the Catholic faith, teaching and moral discipline, and shall not harm communion with the Church. See also Policy 6400.

### **1690 Role of Parents**

In the sacrament of Matrimony, parents receive the grace and ministry of the Christian education of their children. The witness of Christian life given by parents is the first Christian experience. This catechesis in the family precedes, accompanies and enriches all forms of catechesis. (cf. *GDC* 226, 227)

### **1700 Archdiocesan Catechetical Leaders Association (ACLA)**

The association seeks to promote among all who catechize, a oneness with the Archbishop in his teaching mission. In light of this mission, the professional growth, spiritual development and personal support of catechetical leaders shall be fostered under the guidance and direction of the Archbishop of Washington. Membership in this association is voluntary.

## 2000 CATECHESIS FOR ADULTS

Catechesis is a permanent school of the faith and follows the major life stages. Adults have the capacity "to live the message in its fully developed form" (*National Directory for Catechesis*, 48, A). Every parish shall provide ongoing programs of adult catechesis. "Because of its importance and because all other forms of catechesis are oriented in some way to it, the catechesis of adults must have high priority at all levels of the Church" (*National Directory for Catechesis*, 48, A).

### 2100 Christian Initiation of Adults and Children of Catechetical Age (RCIA)

"The catechumenate, or formation of catechumens, aims at bringing their conversion and faith to maturity, in response to the divine initiative and in union with an ecclesial community. The catechumenate is to be 'a formation in the whole Christian life... during which the disciples will be joined to Christ their teacher. The catechumens should be properly initiated into the mystery of salvation and the practice of the evangelical virtues, and they should be introduced into the life of faith, liturgy, and charity of the People of God by successive sacred rites'" (*CCC*, 1248).

#### 2110 Ordinary Use of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

Parishes shall use the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the following circumstances: (see *LNAP*, 2.1.6 and 2.11.1-2.12.6)

- A. The baptism of adults;
- B. The baptism of children who have reached catechetical age (about the age of seven);
- C. The preparation of baptized but uncatechized adult Catholics for confirmation and/or first Holy Communion;
- D. The reception into full communion with the Catholic Church of non-Catholic adults and children of catechetical age; and
- E. The preparation of candidates for reception into full communion with the Catholic Church when they are not catechized.

#### 2120 Catechesis, at the Service of Christian Initiation

Catechesis and sacramental preparation most properly take place within the parish community, just as the parish church is the most fitting place for the celebration of the sacraments. The parish initiates the Christian people into the ordinary expression of the liturgical life; it gathers them together in the celebration of the Eucharist; it teaches Christ's saving

"We seek to form adults who actively cultivate a lively baptismal and eucharistic spirituality with a powerful sense of mission and apostolate. Nourished by word, sacrament, and communal life, they will witness and share the Gospel in their home, neighborhoods, places of work and centers of culture" (*Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States*, 17).

doctrine; and it practices the charity of the Lord in good works and brotherly love. It is the preeminent setting for the catechesis of adults, youth and children.

"Thus through catechesis the Gospel kerygma (the initial ardent proclamation by which a person is one day overwhelmed and brought to the decision to entrust himself to Jesus Christ by faith) is gradually deepened, developed in its implicit consequences, explained in language that includes an appeal to reason, and channeled towards Christian practice in the Church and the world" (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 25).

## **2200 The Priority of Adult Faith Formation**

Each parish shall have in place effective programs for adult faith formation that aim to deepen one's relationship with Jesus Christ through prayer and learning. Adult formation shall strive to cultivate lifelong commitments to study, spiritual growth, service, and evangelization. As such, they shall foster a vision of what it means to live as a Catholic today, what Catholics believe, and the shared mission to evangelize.

### **2210 Continuous Education in the Faith**

Parish programs shall promote ongoing and lifelong formation by making available a broad spectrum of opportunities for education in the faith, and shall use, to the fullest extent possible, available resources, including new technology and social media.

### **2220 Adult Catechesis in the New Evangelization**

Parish adult faith formation programs shall reflect the essential relationship between catechesis and evangelization.

### **2230 Goals of Adult Catechesis**

Adult catechesis shall strive to embrace all dimensions of adult faith life as outlined in the pastoral plan *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*:

- A. Invite and enable ongoing conversion to Jesus in holiness of life;
- B. Promote and support active membership in the Christian community; and
- C. Call and prepare adults to act as disciples in mission to the world.

### **2240 Qualities of Mature Adult Faith and Discipleship**

Adult faith formation shall strive to develop a mature faith that responds generously to God's call. Such a faith is a "living, explicit and fruitful confession of faith" (*GDC*, 7).

- A. **Living Faith:** A searching faith that seeks understanding in order to grow closer to God and deepen conversion.
- B. **Explicit Faith:** A personal relationship with Jesus, lived in the Christian community, opens people to an explicit confession of the Trinity and creates a climate of discipleship in the mission of the Church.

- C. **Fruitful Faith:** Open to promptings and power of the Holy Spirit, a mature faith cannot remain idle or unproductive; it bears the fruit of evangelization.

## **2250 Respond to the Hungers of the Human Heart**

Design of adult faith formation programs shall take into consideration the needs and interests of the entire community. Planning should begin by listening to the needs of adults in order to develop programs and ministries that are in touch with these real circumstances and concerns.

### **2251 Resources for Adult Faith Formation**

Catechists of adults shall rely in a particular way on Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as primary resources. *The Compendium: Catechism of the Catholic Church, United States Catholic Catechism for Adults, Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, archdiocesan *Liturgical Norms and Policies*, the documents of Vatican II, recent papal encyclicals, documents of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization Archdiocesan Curriculum Guide* shall be used in adult faith formation programs. The Office for Catechesis is available to discuss additional resources for adults.

## **2260 Catechesis Across the Thresholds of Adulthood**

Catechesis is lifelong and parishes shall provide appropriate formation at each of life's stages e.g., prior to marriage, baptism, and also in life's challenges, e.g., sickness, divorce, immigration issues, unemployment, mixed marriages, aging, and key concerns of the dying. All life situations, as well as, social justice issues, need to be tied to catechesis.

## **2300 Marriage Preparation**

"The whole Christian life bears the mark of the spousal love of Christ and the Church. The sacrament of Baptism is the nuptial bath which precedes the wedding feast, the sacrament of the Eucharist. Christian marriage in its turn is the sacrament of the covenant of Christ and the Church, a sacrament by which the spouses are united by God in the image of the indefectible union of Christ with the Church, and consecrated and strengthened by sacramental grace to live out that union" (*LNAP*, 9.1.8).

### **2310 Catechesis Prior to the Celebration of Marriage**

Pastors and their designated catechists shall take care that the parish community offers couples preparing for marriage personal preparation which disposes the spouses to the holiness and duties of their new state (cf. *LNAP*, 9.2.1, b).



## 2320 Ongoing Catechesis for Those Who Are Married

Pastors and their designated catechists shall take care that the parish community offers the Christian faithful the assistance they need to preserve the matrimonial state in the Christian spirit, protect the conjugal covenant and grow in holiness and fullness within the context of family life (cf. *LNAP*, 9.2.1, d).

## 2400 Baptism of Infants

"Where infant Baptism has become the form in which this sacrament is usually celebrated, it has become a single act encapsulating the preparatory stages of Christian initiation in a very abridged way. By its very nature infant Baptism requires a *post-baptismal catechumenate*. Not only is there a need for instruction after Baptism, but also for the necessary flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth. The *catechism* has its proper place here" (CCC, 1231).

Infants - and children who have not yet attained the age of reason - cannot make a personal profession of Christian faith; therefore, parents are obliged both to ensure that their infant children are baptized, and to provide a home environment wherein a young disciple of Christ can grow in faith and complete the process of Christian initiation.

## 2410 Adult Catechesis for Infant Baptism

Catechesis shall be provided for and required of parents and godparents who are presenting an infant for baptism (cf. *LNAP*, 3.8.6). Pastors are encouraged to work closely with parents presenting children for baptism to ensure they are properly catechized.

Such catechesis shall:

- A. Center on the meaning of baptism as expressed in the liturgical rite; and
- B. Direct parents and godparents toward the whole life of the infant in order to:
  - i. Enlighten faith;
  - ii. Direct the heart toward God;
  - iii. Foster active participation in the liturgy;
  - iv. Inspire apostolic activity; and
  - v. Nurture a life in accord with the spirit of Christ (cf. *LNAP*, 3.8.7).

"Parents are the most influential agents of catechesis for their children. They have a unique responsibility for the education of their children. They are the first educators, or catechists. They catechize primarily by the witness of their Christian lives and by their love for the faith. One way that parents communicate Christian values and attitudes to their children is by loving each other within the context of a Christian marriage and their love for Christ and his Church. Their participation in the life of the parish – above all in the Sunday Eucharist – their willingness to evangelize and serve others, and their dedication to daily prayer demonstrate the authenticity of their profession of faith" (*National Directory of Catechesis*, 54, C).

## **2420 Post-Baptismal Mystagogy**

The parish community shall provide ongoing catechetical support and prayer for families to assist them in nurturing the faith of the newly baptized.

Resources shall be provided to families to assist them in building a Catholic household imbued with prayer, learning, and faith sharing.

## **3000 CATECHESIS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

The Catholic Church recognizes that parents are the primary and principal educators of their children, especially in the task of faith formation.

Parish catechetical programs shall assist parents by providing formal, systematic catechesis and sacramental preparation programs. Parents present their children for initiation into the ecclesial community when they request the sacrament of Baptism. This initiation into the Mystical Body of Christ is completed through the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist. Parents have both a right and a responsibility to be intimately involved in their child's sacramental preparation and reception, and ongoing faith formation. In consultation with the parents and catechists, pastors have the primary role in discerning the child's readiness for sacraments.

### **3100 Curriculum Guidelines for Religious Education Grades Pre-K through 8**

Parish catechetical programs shall use the *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guide* and follow policies and procedures of the Office for Catechesis.

#### **3110 *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guide* Pre-K through 8**

The *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guide* shall be the basis for lesson planning and serve as the guide for the use of approved textbooks.

The archdiocesan curriculum guide establishes consistent content for the teaching of the faith across the archdiocese to ensure that future generations of Catholics are well formed and know the truth that Jesus taught us (cf. *FDNE*, Introduction).

This tool states what those who participate in parish and Catholic elementary school religious education programs should know, understand and do at each grade level. The curriculum guide is based on the pillars of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and organized by the six key elements of Catholic life (also known as the six fundamental tasks of catechesis) as outlined in the *General Directory for Catechesis*, 85-86.

### **3120 Curriculum Implementation**

The *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guide* shall be the basis for lesson planning and serve as the guide for the use of approved textbooks.

Parish catechetical leaders shall provide resources and direction, as appropriate to catechists to ensure that the grade level core content of the curriculum guide is effectively taught over the course of the academic year. Resources can include textbook correlations, planning guides, syllabi and supplemental materials to build upon the textbook content and bring it into closer alignment with the *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guide*.

### **3130 Parents and the Curriculum**

Parents shall be made aware of the *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization Archdiocesan Religious Education Curriculum Guide*, in order that they better understand the sequential presentation of the basic teachings of the Catholic Church as well as those other elements which aid in the faith development of their children.

Resources shall be made available to parents to assist them in their role in teaching the faith to their children.

### **3140 Selection of Approved Textbooks**

Religion textbooks used with students in grades K-8 shall be selected from those which have received prior archdiocesan approval.

The current list of religion textbooks approved for use with students in grades K-8 together with publisher-developed correlations can be found on the archdiocesan website: <http://site.adw.org/catechetical-textbook>.

Use of all religion textbooks shall be correlated with the key elements, standards and indicators of the *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guide*.

### **3150 Appropriate Catechetical Placement**

Parish catechetical programs shall make every effort to provide remedial instruction for students who lack religious formation appropriate to their age or grade level.

When students lack sufficient religious instruction, the catechetical leader shall consult with the parents in order to determine an appropriate catechetical placement. The catechetical leader shall also evaluate the student before a placement is made.

### **3160 Faith Knowledge Assessment**

Assessment provides the information necessary to guide catechists in determining both their progress and the progress of their students in attaining the standards, as specified in the curriculum. Ongoing assessment also encourages lifelong faith formation and identifies areas of growth needed for individuals, catechists, their catechetical leaders and the programs themselves.

#### **3161 Annual Assessment**

All parish catechetical programs shall annually assess students in grades 3 through 8 using the archdiocesan Faith Knowledge Assessment in accord with procedures. Catholic homeschool students are encouraged to take part in the annual assessment.

#### **3162 Parish Assessment Data Results Review**

Parish catechetical leaders, in collaboration with pastors, shall review the results of the Faith Knowledge Assessment and use them to affirm or improve the parish catechetical programs as appropriate.

#### **3163 Office for Catechesis Assessment Data Results Review**

The Office for Catechesis shall review the results of the Faith Knowledge Assessment and use the data to determine any needed training for catechists, adjustments to the curriculum, or new resources.

### **3200 Curriculum Guidelines for Religious Education Grades 9 through 12**

Parish youth ministry and catechetical programs shall use the *Curriculum Standards for Adolescent Catechesis* and follow policies and procedures of the Office for Youth Ministry.

#### **3210 Curriculum Implementation**

Youth ministry and parish catechetical leaders shall work to further the faith formation of young people as they move from childhood to adolescence by implementing youth ministry and intentional catechesis integrated into the lived experience of teens.

#### **3220 Selection of Approved Textbooks**

Those adolescent catechesis models which use textbook series and stand-alone texts must be selected from those that conform to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as designated by the USCCB Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee the Use of the Catechism.

Additional resources must meet the following criteria: doctrinal soundness, catechetical creativity, and cultural adaptability. Electronic media resources employed in adolescent

catechesis - which address questions of faith and morals - should be thoroughly reviewed prior to usage.

### **3300 Parish Catechetical Programs Attendance Policy**

Parents have the ultimate responsibility for the catechetical formation of their children. Parents with children attending public or other non-Catholic schools have an obligation to see that their children, elementary through high school, attend parish catechetical sessions, as well as attend Mass each Sunday.

#### **3310 Attendance**

Regular attendance shall be expected of all children enrolled in the parish catechetical program. Policies and procedures regarding attendance shall be published in parent handbooks and clearly reinforced throughout the year.

#### **3320 Drop Off and Pick Up Parent Responsibilities**

Parents are to be reminded of their responsibility to drop off and pick up their children on time at the beginning of each catechetical year.

Parents should identify in writing those individuals who are permitted to pick-up and drop-off their child.

When there is a recurring problem with late drop-off or pick up of a student a meeting should be held with the parents to address the problem.

#### **3330 Parent Responsibility and Absenteeism**

Catechetical leaders shall communicate with parents when the attendance of their child falls below the expected norm of 85%. The pastor and catechetical leader will develop as they deem necessary, a protocol for absenteeism that may include a requirement that a student whose attendance is irregular complete make-up work at home.

#### **3340 Recordkeeping**

A record of attendance shall be maintained and securely stored by each parish program.

#### **3350 Instruction Time**

Parish catechetical programs shall adhere to the instruction time expectations as outlined in the *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guide*.

- A. "The minimum requirement is 30 hours of catechesis per program year for Pre-K through 8th grade levels" (*FDNE*, Introduction, 16).

Catechetical instruction includes direct teaching and classroom activities, safe environment training, family-centered catechetical sessions and implementation of the archdiocesan Faith Knowledge Assessment, worship and penance services.

- B. Family-centered parish catechetical programs and home-school families should follow this policy as they develop catechetical plans each year. See Policy 5500 for information on family-centered catechesis.

### **3360 Out of Parish Enrollment**

Normally families and individuals shall enroll in the catechetical programs of their "home" parish as defined by territorial area, ethnic origin, or particular rites.

Families and individuals from one parish may enroll and participate in the catechetical program of another parish under special circumstances. The family may be asked to provide a letter from their pastor regarding this arrangement.

- A. Enrollment shall be subject to the requirements and conditions of the "host" parish, such as availability of space and class size.
- B. Periodic communication between the two parishes shall be recommended especially where sacramental preparation is involved.

### **3400 Program Safety**

In order to ensure the safety and well-being of students, catechists and parents, all archdiocesan parish catechetical programs, pre-K through high school, shall maintain a safe and orderly environment. Parish programs shall re-examine safety and security plans annually - bearing in mind the availability of resources, appropriate adjustments shall be made to ensure the safety of everyone involved with the program.

#### **3410 Crisis and Emergency Response Plans**

All parish catechetical programs shall adopt and implement safety and emergency response plans in accordance with guidelines provided by the Office for Catechesis. The catechetical leader shall be responsible for communicating said plans to the program community.

#### **3420 Fire and Building Safety**

Adequate fire and building safety procedures shall be established for every parish program. The catechetical leader shall be responsible for communicating said plans to the program community.

### **3430 Prevention Programming**

All parish catechetical programs shall make every effort to prohibit acts of harassment and bullying. To that end, parish programs shall develop prevention programs that enhance the safety of the school in accordance with the guidelines published by the Office for Catechesis.

### **3440 Classroom Supervision**

Students are to be supervised at all times. Students should never be left in a room without adult supervision. Catechists should be present in the classroom prior to the start of class. A catechist should never leave students alone. Upon dismissal, the catechist is to remain until all students have departed or until remaining students have been taken to an agreed-upon, supervised waiting area.

"The Archdiocese will do all in its power to create a safe environment for children and young people, to prevent their physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect and to bring the healing ministry of the Archdiocese to bear wherever possible"  
*(Archdiocese of Washington Child Protection Policy, Introduction, 1).*

### **3450 Custody Arrangements**

Archdiocesan parish catechetical programs shall act upon official court orders regarding student custody issues. Parish programs shall provide a non-custodial parent access to records or other program information regarding his or her child unless there is a court order to the contrary. If there are restrictions regarding access to the student or the sharing of information with the non-custodial parent, it is the custodial parent's responsibility to provide the religious education program with a court-certified copy of the court order at the time of registration.

### **3460 Child Abuse and Protection**

For the safety and welfare of all students all parish catechetical programs shall adhere to the Archdiocese of Washington *Child Protection Policy*.

### **3470 Health and Allergy Requirements**

All relevant student health and allergy documentation should be submitted to the parish catechetical leader by the parents when a student registration is submitted. Such documentation shall be kept in a secure place in the parish catechetical program office.

### **3480 Student Arrival and Dismissal**

The parish shall develop an arrival and dismissal procedure for students in the program. This procedure is to be clearly communicated to the parents at the beginning of each catechetical year.

### **3490 Emergency Contact Information**

Emergency contact information for parents/guardians should be kept on file in a secure yet accessible location.

#### **3491 Discipline**

Behavior expectations and responsibilities of students and families shall be clearly defined and communicated to students and documented in parent handbooks. Each program shall be responsible for developing and implementing codes for behavior and discipline that serve the best interests of students and the parish community. Corporal punishment shall not be permitted under any circumstance.

#### **3492 Catechist/Student Ratio**

All parish programs shall determine class size for each grade level consistent with, and relative to, the integrity of the instructional program.

#### **3493 Field Trip Policy**

All parish field trips shall adhere to the procedures and guidelines developed by Catholic Mutual Group. These procedures, guidelines and forms are available from the Office for Catechesis. Proposed field trips to other states or countries must be reviewed and approved by the Office for Catechesis prior to travel.

### **3500 Communication with Parents**

#### **3510 Parent Handbook**

All parishes shall be encouraged to annually distribute a parent handbook that presents program policies, regulations and procedures.

A pamphlet, newsletter, section of the parish bulletin, internet page, or email distribution list may be used to impart this information.

The following information should be provided:

- A. Catechetical goals and objectives;
- B. Sacramental requirements;
- C. The subject matter, title and series of text used for each grade level (and online access if appropriate);
- D. A schedule of times and dates of classes and special parish events;
- E. Disciplinary codes;
- F. Posted office hours or a phone number to arrange appointments;



- G. Information for inclement weather conditions;
- H. Phone numbers to call for emergency information; and
- I. Information on any program or textbook fees.

## **4000 SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION FOR CHILDREN**

All parish catechetical programs shall adhere to all archdiocesan *Liturgical Norms and Policies* to ensure the development of an authentic spiritual and sacramental life for students. Particular attention should be given to the *Liturgical Norms and Policies* for canonical directives regarding the rites, times and places associated with the celebration of the sacraments.

Pastors shall be responsible for the sacramental preparation of their parishioners (*Policies for Catholic Schools, 1225*).

The parish catechetical program provides catechesis for students who attend public or non-Catholic private schools. Catholic schools provide the same catechetical instruction to students who are preparing to receive the sacraments in their parish.

Parents are to be reminded of their unique and God-given role in the Christian formation of their children. They should have opportunities for personal, spiritual preparation, and be given information about practical preparations for their children's reception of the sacraments (cf. *Liturgical Norms and Policies, 4.12.1 and 5.13.2*).

### **4100 Parish Community Sacramental Celebration**

First Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation shall be celebrated in the parish that the student's family attends. Pastors may allow exemptions to this policy. (*Policies for Catholic Schools, 1226*).

### **4110 Sacramental Preparation for Catholic School Students**

While Catholic schools offer the catechetical component of sacramental preparation for students, parents of students in Catholic schools (both archdiocesan and independent) shall contact the pastor or designated catechetical leader of their home parish in order to understand sacramental preparation procedures, and register in the parish sacramental preparation program.

"All Catholic schools, Archdiocesan and independent, shall collaborate with the pastors of students to ensure that any school instruction for sacramental preparation is fully integrated with and supportive of the student's primary parish sacramental preparation program" (*Policies for Catholic Schools, 1225*).

### **4120 Sacramental Preparation for Homeschooling Students**

Homeschooling parents shall register their child in the parish sacramental preparation program of their home parish; however, students are encouraged to participate in the

formal parish religious education classes provided by the parish in which they will be receiving the sacraments. Children preparing to receive a sacrament, and their parents, shall comply with sacramental preparation requirements of the parish program and attend student/parent programs or meetings as outlined by the pastor and his catechetical staff.

#### **4130 Liturgical Norms for the Celebration of the Sacraments**

Catechetical leaders shall consult the *Liturgical Norms and Policies* for essential information on the liturgical and canonical aspects of each of the sacraments and rites celebrated in the parish.

#### **4200 First Penance**

"The value of this practice is to catechize the children, from the age of reason, to the true Christian spirit of penance and conversion, to growth in self-knowledge and self-control, to a true sense of sin, even of venial sin, to the necessity of asking for pardon from God, and above all, to a loving and confident abandonment to the mercy of the Lord" (*LNAP*, 5.11.2).

#### **4210 Candidates**

Parents shall enroll their children in parish sacramental programs as the child approaches the age of reason. The Church shall augment formation within the Christian family as children prepare to celebrate the sacrament of Penance for the first time. The first celebration of this sacrament must always precede the reception of Eucharist.

#### **4220 Catechetical Emphasis**

Catechists shall communicate not only a sense of sin, but also the joy of the encounter with the loving Father who forgives, signified by the absolution given by the priest (cf. *LNAP*, 5.11.2). Catechists shall develop within the student a proper understanding of and motivation for offering the Act of Contrition with honesty and trust.

#### **4230 Reconciliation Formation for Parents**

Meetings for parents and any additional formational activities for students are the responsibility of the parish and should be held in the year or so prior to the celebration of First Holy Communion. Parents should be reminded of their unique and God-given role in the Christian formation of their children. They should be given an opportunity to prepare spiritually for this sacramental celebration and to receive practical information concerning preparations for their child's First Penance.

#### **4240 Candidates with Developmental Disabilities**

"Only those who have the use of reason are capable of committing serious sin. Nevertheless, even young children and persons with mental disabilities often are conscious of committing acts that are sinful to some degree and may experience a sense

of guilt and sorrow. As long as the individual is capable of having a sense of contrition for having committed sin, even if he or she cannot describe the sin precisely in words, the person may receive sacramental absolution. Those with profound mental disabilities, who cannot experience even minimal contrition, may be invited to participate in penitential services with the rest of the community to the extent of their ability" (*Archdiocese of Washington Sacramental Resource Guide for Persons with Special Needs*, 23).

### **4300 First Eucharist**

The administration of Holy Eucharist to children requires that they have sufficient knowledge and careful preparation so that they understand the mystery of Christ according to their capacity and are able to receive the body of Christ with faith and devotion (*LNAP*, 5.6.1). A child is presumed to have reached the age of reason with the completion of their seventh year (*LNAP*, 5.6.2).

#### **4310 Ongoing Formation**

"The time of formation must be understood to include the whole period following the child's baptism. Thus, parents are to help their children develop a life of prayer, a knowledge and love of Jesus Christ and his teachings, and a practical relationship with the local church, especially through regular attendance at Mass" (*LNAP*, 5.10.3).

#### **4320 Specific Preparation for First Communion**

Catechesis for First Communion shall strive to inculcate sufficient knowledge through careful preparation so that students may understand the mystery of Christ according to their capacity and receive the Body of Christ with faith and devotion (cf. *LNAP*, 5.6.1).

#### **4330 Preparation for Participation in the Action of the Eucharist**

"Candidates should be well prepared to sing the acclamations of the Eucharistic Prayer, join in the Lord's Prayer, share the sign of peace, and partake in Holy Communion" (*LNAP*, 5.14.5).

#### **4340 Catechesis on Reception of the Sacrament**

"Since the Communion rite to which they are admitted includes the possibility of sharing in both the Eucharistic bread and cup, children should be fully prepared for Communion under both forms" (*LNAP*, 5.14.7).

#### **4350 Uncatechized Children**

"In the case of children who have not participated consistently in catechetical programs, the pastor should consult with catechists and parents to determine the type of preparation required" (*LNAP*, 5.10.7).

#### **4360 Eucharistic Formation for Parents**

Formational meetings and activities for parents and students are the responsibility of the parish and should be held in the year or so prior to the celebration of First Holy Communion. Parents should be reminded of their unique and God-given role in the Christian formation of their children. They should be given an opportunity to prepare spiritually for this sacramental celebration and to receive practical information concerning preparations for their child's sacramental celebration of First Holy Communion (cf. *LNAP*, 5.13.2).

"It is for the pastor to exercise vigilance so that children who have not attained the use of reason or whom he judges are not sufficiently disposed do not approach holy communion" (*Code of Canon Law*, Paragraph 914).

#### **4370 Minimum Age for Reception of First Eucharist**

Children are to be admitted to Holy Communion who have attained the use of reason—which is presumed to occur by the age of seven. Exceptions may be made for children who are exceptionally mature or who have disabilities (cf. *LNAP* 5.9.2–5.9.3).

#### **4380 Candidates with Developmental Disabilities**

The existence of a disability is not considered in and of itself as disqualifying a person from receiving the Eucharist. The criterion for reception of Holy Communion is the same for persons with developmental and mental disabilities as for all persons, namely, that the person be able to distinguish the Body of Christ from ordinary food. In the case of individuals with developmental disabilities this recognition may be evidenced through manner, gesture, or reverential silence rather than verbally (cf. *Archdiocese of Washington Sacramental Resource Guide for Persons with Special Needs*, 20).

#### **4390 Registration of First Communion**

Parishes must annotate in the First Holy Communion register the names of those who received First Holy Communion and the place and date. Notations must also be made in the baptismal registers of the communicants. It is the responsibility of the parish to send a First Communion notice to the parish in which the student was baptized.

#### **4400 Confirmation**

"Preparation for Confirmation should aim at leading the Christian toward a more intimate union with Christ and a more lively familiarity with the Holy Spirit—his actions, his gifts and his biddings—in order to be more capable of assuming the apostolic responsibilities of Christian life. To this end, catechesis for Confirmation should strive to awaken a sense of belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ, the universal Church as well as the parish community" (*LNAP*, 4.10.3). Care should be given to include post-sacramental formation for those who have been confirmed (cf. *LNAP*, 4.32.2).

#### **4410 Confirmation in the Parish Community**

Confirmation shall be celebrated for all students in the parish whether they attend the parish catechetical program, an archdiocesan Catholic school, an independent Catholic school, a non-Catholic private school, or are homeschooled. Confirmation may be celebrated on a regional basis.

#### **4420 Ongoing Formation of Candidates**

Candidates shall prepare for the sacrament of Confirmation through ongoing participation in the catechetical programs provided by the parish, augmented by the formation they receive within their families (cf. *LNAP*, 4.9.2; 4.10.1).

#### **4430 Catechesis for Confirmation**

Catechesis for the sacrament of Confirmation shall assist the personal progress of the candidates and foster growth of the community. Catechesis for Confirmation shall include the archdiocesan Confirmation video provided by the Office for Catechesis. Additionally, catechists shall take care that their teaching:

- A. Is filled with the spirit of the Gospel;
- B. Is adapted to the signs and cycles of the liturgical year; and
- C. Is suited to the needs of the candidates (cf. *LNAP*, 4.4.1).

#### **4440 Specific Preparation of Candidates**

Preparation in the year immediately preceding the celebration of the rite shall include:

- A. Reflection on the responsibilities of one's baptismal promises;
- B. Reflection on the nature and dignity of the sacrament of Confirmation and the rite in which it is celebrated;
- C. Guidance in a more personal relationship with Christ and a deeper knowledge of his saving mysteries; and
- D. Leading the candidate toward spiritual purification and enlightenment as immediate, inward preparation for the celebration of the sacramental rite (cf. *LNAP*, 4.10.3).

#### **4450 Confirmation Formation for Parents**

Parents of candidates for Confirmation shall be given formation opportunities in the year or so prior to Confirmation. Such opportunities should include catechesis on the sacrament in order to deepen their understanding of Confirmation in the life of the Church, developing their own spiritual life and information regarding the practical preparations for their child's Confirmation (cf. *LNAP*, 4.12.1).

#### **4460 Normal Age for Confirmation**

"In the Archdiocese of Washington, young Catholics who were baptized as infants are confirmed in the seventh or eighth grade" (*LNAP*, 4.8.6).

#### **4470 Non-Catholic Children of Catechetical Age**

Non-Catholic children who have reached catechetical age shall be confirmed at the time of their baptism or reception into full communion even when this occurs before the normal age of seventh or eighth grade (cf. *LNAP* 4.8.7). Such children shall be encouraged to attend ongoing catechetical instruction after reception of the sacraments of initiation. See also Policy 2100, 2110.

#### **4480 Candidates with Developmental Disabilities**

"Persons who are intellectually disabled and have reached the normal age and are receiving formation within the community according to their capacity, as is their right, are to be confirmed if they express some disposition to receive the sacrament. In cases of profound disability, there should be no hesitation about confirming the person at the normal age, if not sooner, without further requirements" (*LNAP*, 4.8.4).

#### **4490 Registration of Confirmation**

A record of Confirmation shall be recorded in the parish register. Additionally, it shall be the responsibility of the confirming parish to send a Confirmation notice to the parish in which the candidate was baptized (*Code of Canon Law* can. 894-896).

### **5000 CATECHESIS FOR SPECIAL SITUATIONS AND ENVIRONMENTS**

#### **5100 Christian Initiation of Children Who Have Reached Catechetical Age**

Parishes shall provide for the initiation of children not baptized as infants who have attained the use of reason and are of catechetical age. These children may seek Christian initiation either at the direction of their parents or guardians or, with parental permission, at their own initiative (*RCIA*, 252-259). See also Policy 2100, 2110.

- A. The process of initiation and the catechetical instruction they receive shall be adapted to their growth in faith.
- B. As with adults, their initiation shall be divided into four periods:
  1. **Precatechumenate or Inquiry** (Evangelization) leading to the Rite of Acceptance (*RCIA*, 260-276);
  2. **Catechumenate** leading to the Rite of Election (*RCIA*, 277-290);
  3. **Purification and Enlightenment** (usually coincides with Lent) leading to the sacraments of initiation (*RCIA*, 291, 303); and
  4. **Mystagogy** (*RCIA*, 244-251).

## **5200 Catechesis for Persons with Disabilities**

Parishes shall strive to provide persons with disabilities with opportunities to participate fully in parish life and worship. To that end, parishes shall make reasonable accommodations to provide catechetical instruction and sacramental preparation for people with developmental, emotional, or physical disabilities. Catechetical Leaders shall consult the *Archdiocese of Washington Sacramental Resource for Persons with Special Needs*.

Parishes may be unable to meet the needs of a person with disabilities. In such a case the parish shall refer the individual or family to a neighboring parish or to a specialized program in the Archdiocese of Washington.

### **5210 Catechists of Persons with Disabilities**

Catechists and aides assigned to teach students with disabilities shall receive specialized training and support—some of which is offered by the Archdiocese of Washington.

### **5220 Catechetical Resources for Persons with Disabilities**

"We note that participants in catechetical programs should receive preparation appropriate to their gifts, abilities and developmental level. Thus, catechesis and catechetical materials must be geared to the needs of each person, in whatever language or communication modality that works best for that individual" (*Archdiocese of Washington Sacramental Resource Guide for Persons with Special Needs*, p. 2).

Parishes, to the greatest extent possible, shall provide catechetical programs that carefully assist parents of children with special needs. An online catechetical resources list is available through the Archdiocese of Washington Department of Special Needs Ministries on the archdiocesan website.

## **5300 Religious Instruction in the Home for Public and Non-Catholic Private School Students**

As an alternative to parish-based religious education, parents have the right to instruct their child(ren) in the home. Parents whose children attend public schools, or non-Catholic private schools, and who choose to provide for the catechesis of their own child(ren) in their own home shall comply with Policy 5310.

### **5310 Responsibilities of the Parents**

- A. Give notice to their pastor, or his designee, who will discern with the parents their understanding of the commitment necessary to teach the faith in a systematic manner. This provides the pastor or designated catechetical leader an opportunity to share information about the parish catechetical program and to explain the parish requirements for sacramental preparation which may affect the child(ren).

The parish will also share resources as appropriate, such as the archdiocesan religion curriculum guide.

- B. Register with the parish catechetical leader so as to receive communications about parish activities and programs.
- C. Record student progress and submit an annual record to parish.
- D. Participate in the parish sacramental program offered by the parish for First Penance, First Eucharist and Confirmation in order to enter fully into the parish celebrations of these sacraments.

### **5320 Responsibilities of the Parish**

- A. Request that the parents register with the catechetical leader so that children receiving religious instruction at home will be included in all communications about parish activities and programs.
- B. Request some record of student progress. Archdiocesan guidelines require a minimum of 30 contact 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.

### **5330 Responsibilities of the Parish Catechetical Leaders**

- A. Make the *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guide* and resources available to the parents. Parents shall be strongly encouraged to use these materials and to stay in communication with the catechetical leader.
- B. Give families suitable notice regarding particular parish guidelines for sacramental preparation.

### **5400 Homeschooling Families**

In recent years, recognizing that a number of Catholic families choose to provide their children's education at home, Catholic educators and pastoral leaders call upon parishes to affirm this vital and vibrant activity, reach out in welcome to homeschooling families, and include them in all pastoral and sacramental activities and ministries of their parishes.

For a thorough treatment of homeschooling policy, see Appendix C: *Catholic Religious Education in the Home*:

Can. 793 §1. Parents and those who take their place are bound by the obligation and possess the right of educating their offspring. Catholic parents also have the duty and right of choosing those means and institutions through which they can provide more suitably for the Catholic education of their children, according to local circumstances.

§2. Parents also have the right to that assistance, to be furnished by civil society, which they need to secure the Catholic education of their children.

Can. 794 §1. The duty and right of educating belongs in a special way to the Church, to which has been divinely entrusted the mission of assisting persons so that they are able to reach the fullness of the Christian life.



*A Policy Statement of the Archdiocese of Washington for Homeschooling Families*, which is intended as a resource for homeschooling families as well as for parish leaders.

Parents are their children's primary educators, but not the exclusive educating community. Through the sacrament of Baptism each person 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 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, 2236).

#### **5410 The Parish Church as Community**

Homeschool families shall be encouraged to participate in parish events in order to support and foster a strong sense of belonging to the parish community.

#### **5420 Catechesis and the Sacraments**

Homeschool parents and students shall comply with all parish policies pertaining to preparation for the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist and Confirmation.

While some expectations can be placed on homeschooling parents and students for sacramental preparation and for involvement in the parish community, these demands cannot be excessive or fail to recognize the preparation already accomplished in the home.

#### **5500 Family-Centered Catechesis**

Family-centered programs are intended to bring families together to share their faith, to learn the teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church and to celebrate what they profess as Catholics. In developing a family-centered catechetical program, the parish catechetical leader, under the supervision of the pastor, shall be responsible for providing parish members with an explanation of the program before it is initiated in the parish.

- A. Parents shall understand their role in the program and commit to faithful participation with their children.
- B. Evaluation of the program shall take place annually by catechetical leader(s) and catechists involved in the program.
- C. The children may be required to take either a written or oral assessment annually. This assessment shall be based on the archdiocesan religion curriculum.

## **6000 PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION**

### **6100 Funding Parish Catechetical Programs**

The parish community has the responsibility to provide programs for lifelong catechesis; as such, pastors shall see that an adequate allocation of funds is made available to satisfy this obligation.

The catechetical budget shall be realistic in providing for the total cost of the parish catechetical programs for adults, youth and children. This includes textbooks, office supplies and resource materials for each parish program as well as for any compensation, benefits and ongoing formation for catechists and catechetical leaders.

- A. Parishes may establish and charge a reasonable registration fee or tuition for participation in their various religious education programs. However, no family or individual shall be refused participation in a program because of an inability to pay such a fee.
- B. The pastor shall give final approval of the catechetical budget.

### **6200 Catechetical Program Review**

The parish shall assess annually the catechetical needs of each its constituent groups: adults, adolescents and younger children, and formulate goals to meet those needs.

### **6300 Catechetical Personnel Policies**

All personnel matters shall follow archdiocesan Employment Policies. All aspects of parish religious education and catechetical programs shall be in compliance with the Archdiocese of Washington *Child Protection Policy*.

### **6400 Appointment of a Catechetical Leader**

The Pastor as chief catechist of the parish has the overall responsibility for the teaching of the faith through all parish programs. He shall appoint qualified parish catechetical leaders as appropriate and where resources permit, to oversee and administer the parish catechetical program(s). In the absence of a catechetical leader, the pastor will serve as the catechetical leader.

#### **6410 Personal and Professional Qualities of the Catechetical Leader**

Of central importance to the ministry of catechesis are parish catechetical leaders who are called by the competent authority of the Church, both to announce the Good News of Jesus and to prepare others to evangelize in His name.

This call presupposes certain qualities and skills which are essential to the task of catechetical leadership. These qualities and skills shape the direction of one's personal

and professional life and give a powerful witness of love and service to others. The catechetical leader, then, is one who demonstrates:

- A. Full and active membership in the Catholic Church;
- B. Maturity of faith, rooted in the person of Jesus, which is characterized by a desire to share what one believes;
- C. A thorough knowledge and love of the Roman Catholic Church;
- D. Unwavering fidelity to the doctrinal and moral teachings of the Church as taught by the Holy Father and the Bishops;
- E. Awareness of the role of the Holy Spirit in the catechetical process, and a healthy appreciation for the limitations of one's efforts;
- F. An approach to ministry which enables and empowers others;
- G. A commitment to spiritual growth through personal and communal prayer; and
- H. An ability to work for unity and understanding, sensitive to the Gospel values of peace and justice.

#### **6420 Recruitment and Selection of Catechetical Leaders**

The Church has always considered catechesis one of her primary tasks (*CT*, 1), therefore it is expected that every parish shall have a designated catechetical leader.

In some instances, a parish may not need the services of, or be able to afford, a full time catechetical leader. Pastors are encouraged to explore ideas of a part-time or shared catechetical leader.

#### **6421 Catechetical Leader Hiring Procedure**

The Office for Catechesis shall make available resources to assist pastors as requested in the hiring process. If hiring an employee, Pastors must follow the recruiting and hiring policies outlined in archdiocesan Employee Policies. All catechetical leaders who are employed by the parish shall consult the archdiocesan Employment Policies for rights and responsibilities of employees of the Archdiocese of Washington.

#### **6430 Written Job Description**

Every pastor is encouraged to develop a written job description for the parish catechetical leader.

#### **6440 Archdiocesan Professional Association for Catechetical Leaders**

The catechetical leader shall be encouraged to participate in the programs and services of the Archdiocesan Catechetical Leaders Association. Membership in this association is voluntary.

## **6500 Recruitment, Qualities and Formation of Catechists**

The catechist responds to a call, which comes from the Lord and is most fully articulated in the local Church by the Bishop. The response to this call includes a willingness to give time and talent, not only to catechizing others, but to one's own continued growth in faith and understanding.

### **6510 Catechist Recruitment**

The catechetical leader shall be responsible for the recruitment and preparation of those individuals associated with the parish catechetical program(s). He or she shall see that all catechists meet the criteria (see Policy 6520) for being a catechist and become duly certified according to the *Archdiocese of Washington Catechist Certification Procedures*.

### **6520 Criteria for Becoming a Catechist**

Parish catechists shall satisfy the following pre-requisites:

- A. Be a fully initiated member of the Catholic Church;
- B. Participate faithfully in the sacramental life of the Church; and
- C. Lead a life that is doctrinally and morally consistent with the person of Jesus and the teachings of the Church.

### **6530 Profession of Faith**

The catechist is to be fully convinced of the truth of the Catholic faith and to proclaim it enthusiastically. In the Archdiocese of Washington, catechesis is guided by a standards-based [religion curriculum guide](#) to provide a standard instrument to ensure that the faith is taught in a complete, systematic and consistent way in all parishes and Catholic school programs.

### **6540 Child Protection Compliance**

All parish catechists and volunteers who have substantial contact with minors or vulnerable adults - shall comply with the Archdiocese of Washington Complete all appropriate steps including background checks and child protection training as outlined in the Archdiocese of Washington *Child Protection Policy*;

### **6550 Ongoing Faith Formation**

Educational workshops, courses, learning resources and teacher meetings shall be provided and funded by the parish for catechists on a regular basis to nurture ongoing theological and

Catechists have a variety of experience levels and competence. Parish programs must therefore help catechists acquire knowledge of the faith and develop skills to hand on the faith to those entrusted to their care (cf. *National Directory for Catechesis*, 235).

methodological preparation for their teaching ministry.

In preparing for their role, catechists shall rely especially on Scripture, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, *The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, archdiocesan *Liturgical Norms and Policies* and other archdiocesan-approved materials.

### **6560 Archdiocesan Certification of Catechists**

Every parish catechist shall pursue certification according to the *Archdiocese of Washington Catechist Certification Procedures* (see Appendix B).

To be certified, a catechist must:

- A. Take part in an initial interview with pastor or catechetical leader;
- B. Complete all appropriate steps including background checks and child protection training as outlined in the Archdiocese of Washington *Child Protection Policy*;
- C. Complete *Living Catholic*—preferably within a blended program (gathered community and online) at the parish where the catechist will serve;
- D. Complete the five core courses of *Faith Foundations* online through *My Catholic Faith Delivered* or in-parish from an archdiocesan approved teacher;
- E. Complete the catechist formation course *Catechesis 101* online through *My Catholic Faith Delivered* or in-parish from an archdiocesan approved teacher; and
- F. Participate in a one-day archdiocesan catechist formation retreat, offered throughout the year in regional locations by the Office for Catechesis.

### **6570 Dismissal of Catechists**

The pastor, who is responsible for the work of catechesis in his parish, retains the right by virtue of his office to dismiss a catechist from his or her teaching responsibility. Situations that might lead to the decision for dismissal include, but are not limited to: incompetency, insubordination, public demonstrations against Church teachings, failure to teach according to guidelines of the archdiocese, using materials contrary to Church teachings, public immorality or scandal.

### **6580 Catechist Files**

The catechetical leader shall maintain records for each parish catechist. The file shall include certification status and other formation courses and workshops attended; record of attendance at required programs, grade levels taught; and performance evaluations. Such files shall be kept in a secure location.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: Catechetical Leadership Competencies

The title of a parish catechetical leadership position is largely contingent on the training, experience of the leader and the program size. The *National Directory for Catechesis* notes, "depending on the scope of responsibilities, the position is usually titled 'parish director of catechesis or religious education,' 'parish coordinator of catechesis or religious education' or 'minister of catechesis or religious education'" (54, 5).

<p><b><u>Director of Religious Education (DRE)</u></b>  <i>Design, direct and implement, under pastor's supervision, the total parish catechetical program, a DRE is expected to hold or to be working toward a Master's Degree in Theology, Religious Studies or Religious Education.</i></p>	<p><b><u>Coordinator of Religious Education (CRE)</u></b>  <i>Administer and implement all or part of a parish catechetical program under Pastor's supervision or that of the DRE. A CRE is expected to hold an undergraduate degree in Theology, Religious Studies or Religious Education. In the absence of such an academic degree the CRE must demonstrate equivalent knowledge</i></p>	<p><b><u>Administrator of Religious Education (ARE)</u></b>  <i>Coordinate all or part of a parish catechetical program under the direct supervision of the pastor.</i></p>
<p><u>Theological/Catechetical Competencies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>faithfully explain and effectively convey the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church regarding Scripture, doctrine, morality and spirituality;</i></li> <li>• <i>recognize and incorporate those elements in culture and society which can lead to a better understanding of the Church's teachings;</i></li> <li>• <i>challenge catechists and other adults to grow in their faith response in light of authoritative Church teaching.</i></li> </ul>	<p><u>Theological/Catechetical Competencies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>identify and explain faithfully the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church regarding Scripture, doctrine, morality and spirituality;</i></li> <li>• <i>assist catechists or other adults in understanding and interpreting their life and faith experiences in light of Scripture and the teachings of the Church.</i></li> </ul>	<p><u>Theological/Catechetical Competencies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>understand and appreciate the major catechetical documents of the Church, especially the Catechism of the Catholic Church;</i></li> <li>• <i>assist catechists in their understanding of Church teachings by referring them to appropriate documents, courses and workshops.</i></li> </ul>
<p><u>Program Development Competencies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>facilitate the process of creating a parish vision of catechesis based upon the catechetical documents of the church;</i></li> <li>• <i>integrate the six tasks of catechesis into a total parish catechetical program;</i></li> <li>• <i>facilitate planning of long and short term goals and objectives for total parish catechesis;</i></li> <li>• <i>oversee the development of curriculum design for total parish catechesis;</i></li> <li>• <i>select, adapt catechetical texts and resources to meet the needs of the parish.</i></li> </ul>	<p><u>Program Development Competencies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>articulate a vision of catechesis as stated in the catechetical documents of the Catholic Church;</i></li> <li>• <i>integrate the six tasks of catechesis into one's area of catechetical responsibility;</i></li> <li>• <i>select from existing learning models the appropriate means for addressing the catechetical needs of one's area of responsibility;</i></li> <li>• <i>facilitate the planning of annual goals and objectives for one's area of responsibility;</i></li> <li>• <i>select and to facilitate the use of approved catechetical texts and resources.</i></li> </ul>	<p><u>Program Development Competencies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>apply the catechetical vision of the Archbishop;</i></li> <li>• <i>see that the six tasks of catechesis are included in one's area of catechetical responsibility;</i></li> <li>• <i>select from existing learning models the most appropriate means for addressing the catechetical needs of one's area of responsibility;</i></li> <li>• <i>implement annual goals and objectives for one's area of responsibility as well as evaluate their effectiveness;</i></li> <li>• <i>assign catechetical responsibilities.</i></li> </ul>

<p><u>(DRE cont...)</u></p> <p><u>Catechist Formation Competencies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>communicate with and affirm others through the use of interpersonal and technical skills;</i></li> <li>• <i>recruit catechists by calling forth and discerning a person's gifts and talents;</i></li> <li>• <i>understand and apply appropriate principles of spiritual growth, education and human development to the formation of catechists;</i></li> <li>• <i>support and encourage the continuing involvement of catechists;</i></li> <li>• <i>educate and supervise catechists according to established archdiocesan policies and procedures;</i></li> <li>• <i>facilitate the development of a faith community among the catechists.</i></li> </ul>	<p><u>(CRE cont...)</u></p> <p><u>Catechist Formation Competencies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>communicate in a way that invites support for and participation in the catechetical ministry of the parish;</i></li> <li>• <i>recruit catechists by calling forth and discerning a person's gifts and talents;</i></li> <li>• <i>provide the initial formation of catechists;</i></li> <li>• <i>facilitate the development of a faith community among the catechists.</i></li> </ul>	<p><u>(ARE cont...)</u></p> <p><u>Catechist Formation Competencies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>call forth those who can assist in the catechetical mission of the parish;</i></li> <li>• <i>communicate with catechists in a supportive manner;</i></li> <li>• <i>provide information and opportunities for catechist formation.</i></li> </ul>
<p><u>Administrative Competencies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>administer a total catechetical program in a manner which reflects an awareness of and a sensitivity to other parish ministries;</i></li> <li>• <i>design and implement effective administrative policies and procedures;</i></li> <li>• <i>consult with others, particularly the pastor and those affected by administrative policies and/or procedures;</i></li> <li>• <i>review, evaluate and recommend policies and procedures;</i></li> <li>• <i>share and/or delegate administrative responsibilities;</i></li> <li>• <i>identify problems and manage conflicts;</i></li> <li>• <i>plan, organize and manage one's time in light of priorities and responsibilities.</i></li> </ul>	<p><u>Administrative Competencies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>administer a catechetical program effectively;</i></li> <li>• <i>articulate effective administrative policies and procedures;</i></li> <li>• <i>consult with the pastor and others;</i></li> <li>• <i>review and evaluate established policies and procedures in one's area of responsibility;</i></li> <li>• <i>coordinate administrative responsibilities;</i></li> <li>• <i>identify problems and manage conflicts;</i></li> <li>• <i>plan, organize and manage time in light of priorities and responsibilities.</i></li> </ul>	<p><u>Administrative Competencies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>coordinate administrative responsibilities;</i></li> <li>• <i>consult with the pastor;</i></li> <li>• <i>encourage parishioners to participate in and support the catechetical program;</i></li> <li>• <i>review and evaluate established procedures.</i></li> </ul>
<p><u>Budget Management Competencies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>draft and present a budget for the catechetical program;</i></li> <li>• <i>respect the budgetary needs and limitations of the parish;</i></li> <li>• <i>administer the budget in a responsible manner.</i></li> </ul>	<p><u>Budget Management Competencies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>draft and submit a catechetical budget for one's area of responsibility;</i></li> <li>• <i>administer the budget in a responsible manner.</i></li> </ul>	<p><u>Budget Management Competencies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>manage an approved budget in a responsible manner;</i></li> <li>• <i>maintain accurate records for both payment of bills and collection of fees.</i></li> </ul>

## **Appendix B: Archdiocese of Washington Catechist Certification Procedures**

Parish and school catechists of adults, youth and children teach the faith in service of the Church's mission to pass on the faith to all generations. Knowledge of the faith is essential to the New Evangelization, for only faith that is known can be lived with confidence and shared with others. These revised certification requirements apply to all archdiocesan catechists, including elementary school religion teachers and parish religious education program catechists. Special information is found below for those currently in the certification process. These revisions do not affect catechists who have already been certified.

### **Discernment of the Call to Be a Catechist**

In light of the privileged role of catechists, careful consideration must be given to the formation and certification of all those who assist pastors in their teaching ministry. This process begins with discernment of the call to catechize. The *National Directory for Catechesis* states:

"The suggestion that anyone can be a catechist should be scrupulously avoided in all communication involving the recruitment of catechists. In consultation with the parish catechetical leader, the pastor should assist the candidate in the discernment of the vocation to be a catechist" (*NDC*, 55b).

Individuals interested in becoming a catechist must satisfy the following pre-requisites:

1. Be a fully initiated member of the Catholic Church;
2. Participate faithfully in the sacramental life of the Church; and
3. Lead a life that is doctrinally and morally consistent with the person of Jesus and the teachings of the Church.

Following the discernment of a call to catechize, the catechist must receive the necessary formation to know the faith, live it and be able to teach it to others. The three-fold purpose of catechist formation is:

1. Increased knowledge of the faith;
2. Spiritual growth, particularly through participating in the sacramental life of the Church; and
3. Continually to enhance and expand methodological practices to meet social and cultural conditions and effectively pass on the faith.

### **Catechist Certification**

The strength of our parish and school catechetical efforts is dependent on the strength of our catechists. The Office for Catechesis provides excellent and accessible courses for catechists to gain the necessary knowledge to fully implement the archdiocesan religion curriculum guide, *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization*, as well as required training in catechetical



methodology. Online and in-parish courses are available in both English and Spanish. Online courses are fully accessible.

### **To Be Certified, a Catechist Must:**

1. Take part in an initial interview with pastor or catechetical leader;
2. Complete all appropriate steps including background checks and child protection training as outlined in the Archdiocese of Washington *Child Protection Policy*;
3. Complete *Living Catholic*—preferably within a blended program (gathered community and online) at the parish where the catechist will serve;
4. Complete the five core courses of *Faith Foundations* online through *My Catholic Faith Delivered* or in-parish from an archdiocesan approved teacher;
5. Complete the catechist formation course *Catechesis 101* online through *My Catholic Faith Delivered* or in-parish from an archdiocesan approved teacher; and
6. Participate in a one-day Archdiocese of Washington catechist formation retreat, offered throughout the year in regional locations by the Office for Catechesis.

### **Certification Program Details:**

#### *Living Catholic:*

An accelerated, online formation program for all Catholics, *Living Catholic* draws on the teachings of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and focuses on deepening one's relationship with Jesus Christ in the context of prayer, learning, and the New Evangelization.

#### *Faith Foundations:*

Available both online and in-parish, *Faith Foundations* effectively teaches the faith to adults so they can live it with greater confidence and share it with others as part of the New Evangelization. The *Faith Foundation* courses also provide the theological content necessary for catechists to teach the faith to others. *Faith Foundations* draws upon and correlates to the current certification courses: Creed, Sacraments, Christian Morality, Prayer and Scripture. Approximately 50 hours are needed to complete all five theological content courses. Basic outlines of each course are available upon request from the Office for Catechesis.

#### *Catechesis 101:*

Available both online and in-parish, *Catechesis 101* trains catechists in methodology so they can more effectively teach others. This course provides a solid overview of the Church's vision of catechesis, methods of learning and practical catechetical methodology that can be incorporated in the classroom. Approximately 10 hours are needed to complete the course.

## Formation Retreat:

A vital element of catechetical methodology is witness within the Christian community. Upon completion of the theological and methodological requirements (*Living Catholic, Faith Foundations* and *Catechesis 101*), catechists will attend a Catechist Formation Retreat (5 hours); this shared experience of prayer and reflection is the final component of the certification process. The retreat is hosted by the Office for Catechesis and held in regional locations throughout the archdiocese over the course of the year. Certificates will be distributed at the conclusion of the retreat. Catechetical leaders and principals interested in hosting a formation retreat should contact the Director for Catechesis at 301-853-5368. This retreat can be tailored to include all faculty and/or a large group of catechists in addition to those seeking certification.

## **Information for those who have already begun the certification process:**

1. If you have already received certification as a catechist, that certification remains valid. Please consult the archdiocesan website for ongoing formation opportunities.
2. Catechists who have begun the certification process will retain credit for all courses already completed. If a catechist is not sure which courses they have taken, please contact the Events Office at [events@adw.org](mailto:events@adw.org) or 301-853-5334 and request a record of certification check (the archdiocesan Events Office assists the Office for Catechesis by tracking certification records and arranging in-parish live courses).
3. Catechists who have successfully completed at least three *Hearts Aflame* courses by December 31, 2012 are not required (but are still encouraged) to take *Living Catholic* or attend a formation retreat in order to complete their certification; they will, however, have to complete their remaining core courses and *Catechesis 101* as appropriate.
4. Equivalencies within the *Faith Foundations* curriculum will be available for those seeking to complete certification. For example, if you have taken Creed, Sacraments and Prayer in *Hearts Aflame*, then you need to complete Christian Morality and Scripture in the new *Foundations* series. Please contact the Office for Catechesis at 301-853-5385 or the Events Office at 301-853-5334 with any questions.
5. As of January 1, 2013, the University of Dayton's *Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation* (VLCFF) will not be a certification option, with the exception of the Special Needs Ministry Study group that is working in conjunction with VLCFF.

## **Costs:**

1. Living Catholic costs \$9.99 per person;
2. Each of the five *Faith Foundations* courses costs the adult learner \$29; however,
  - a. The Office for Catechesis will provide a \$9 per course subsidy for those catechists and religion teachers seeking certification with the support of the pastor, catechetical leader or principal. Therefore, parish leaders may purchase course coupons for those seeking certification for \$20;
  - b. Group discounts and scholarships are available; contact *My Catholic Faith Delivered* at 1-866-981-8964 for further details;

3. In-parish live courses cost \$29 per person. The Office for Catechesis will provide a \$9 per course subsidy for those catechists and religion teachers seeking certification with the support of the pastor, catechetical leader and or principal. Scheduling and registration for in-parish courses is facilitated by the Events Office, 301-853-5334.

## Appendix C

# Catholic Religious Education in the Home:

## A Policy Statement of the Archdiocese of Washington for Homeschooling Families

### **Theological Foundation:**

Just as the apostles accepted the Great Commission to "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations...and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you" (Mt 28:19-20), all the faithful, by virtue of their baptism share in this mission in diverse ways. In successive generations the work of catechesis has continued in many ways. Recently there has been an increase in Catholic homeschool education.

"The family is the primary, but not the only or exclusive, educating community" (John Paul II, *On the Family*, 36) and therefore, 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 responsible for forming children in the four pillars of the Catholic faith: creed, sacraments, Christian life, and prayer. This partnership requires communication between the archbishop, pastors and their designees, and parents, so that all can share responsibility and offer the quality of leadership needed to carry out the catechetical mission of the Church.

### **History/Rationale:**

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 were created to assist families in their responsibility for the education of their children. Catholic schools and parish religious education programs are offered in many forms and varieties that have helped provide the faith formation and growth of their children.

Some parents choose to provide religious instruction at home. Such homeschool families are a great gift to the Church and demonstrate a deep faith of parents and a desire to fulfill their calling as parents in a particular and specific way through catechesis in the home. Those who do so have a sacred obligation to guide their children in the light of the magisterial teachings of the Church.

This policy was developed after consultation with homeschool families and leaders at the parish, school and agency level.

### **Catholic Homeschooling Policy Statement:**

In recent years, recognizing the significant number of Catholic families choosing to provide their children's education at home, Catholic educators and pastoral leaders have called upon parishes

to affirm this vital and vibrant activity, reach out in welcome to homeschooling families, and include them in all pastoral and sacramental activities and ministries of the parishes.

All local communications with homeschooling families in light of this policy should be guided by three principles:

1. Parents have a fundamental right to educate and catechize their children in the home; the parish will respect this right and ensure collaboration and cooperation to assist parents in this task as necessary.
2. As partners in faith formation, parishes, Catholic schools, and homeschooling families strive to collaborate in all appropriate areas.
3. Each partner should be treated with hospitality, respect and Christian charity.

Homeschooling families desiring to use parish or Catholic school properties for educational purposes shall seek approval from the pastor and comply with all applicable archdiocesan policies pertaining to facility usage, child protection and insurance.

### **Roles and Responsibilities in Catholic Homeschooling:**

The Archdiocese of Washington recognizes the roles and responsibilities of each of the partners involved in Catholic religious education in the home: parents, parish community, pastor, archbishop and archdiocesan staff.

#### Parents

Parents are the first to communicate the faith to their children through their example and through systematic instruction, and they 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:

1. The family as the origin or "locus" of catechesis has a unique privilege, that of transmitting the Gospel by rooting it in the context of profound human values (cf. *GDC*, 255).
2. The witness of Christian life given by parents in the family is deepened all the more when parents comment on the methodical catechesis which their children receive in the Christian community and then help them to appropriate it (cf. *GDC*, 226 and *CT*, 68).
3. 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*, 226, 796, and 1136.]

Therefore parents who choose to homeschool their children have a fundamental right to provide catechesis and faith formation in the home.

Since each family situation is unique, homeschool parents who wish to provide catechesis for their children in the home have a responsibility to:

1. Meet with the pastor or his designee to share and discuss a suitable plan for home catechesis.
2. Follow the policies and guidelines of the archdiocese and parish to prepare for reception of the sacraments.
3. Make every effort to contact the pastor or their designee in a timely manner about the proximate preparation for the reception of a sacrament and register with their child in the parish sacramental preparation program. Generally speaking, enrollment does not require homeschool students to attend formal parish religious education classes provided they communicate with the parish in accordance with responsibilities 1 and 2 (above). However, pastors may require attendance in classes as part of the parish sacramental preparation program. (cf. archdiocesan *Liturgical Norms and Policies*, 5.9.1).
4. Homeschool children preparing to receive a sacrament and their parents shall comply with sacramental preparation requirements of the parish program and attend student/parent programs or meetings as outlined by the pastor and his catechetical staff.

### The Parish 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 a person becomes an integral part of the wider Roman Catholic Christian family of God. Deriving from this reality, participation in liturgical, catechetical, and sacramental activities in the parish is an expectation that flows naturally from the communal nature of the Catholic Church.

Therefore, the parish has the right to:

1. Request that the parents register with the parish catechetical leader so that homeschooled children will be included in all communications about parish activities and programs.
2. Request some record of student progress (archdiocesan parish instructional programs require a minimum of 30 hours of religious instruction per year). 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 responsibility to:

1. Provide information to homeschool families concerning the faith formation activities which involve all the children of the parish.
2. Give families suitable notice regarding particular parish guidelines for sacramental preparation and applicable sections of the archdiocesan *Liturgical Norms and Policies* for sacraments, especially the criteria for readiness.

## The Pastor

The pastor, by virtue of his office, is bound to provide for the catechetical formation of adults, youth and children...and is entrusted by the archbishop to make provision for sacramental preparation. Canon 777 states that the pastor or parish catechetical leader is to be attentive to the norms established by the diocesan bishop and to take care in a special way that:

1. The student has received adequate catechesis for the celebration of the sacrament;
2. Children are prepared properly for the first reception of the sacraments of Penance, Holy Eucharist, and confirmation through catechetical instruction during an appropriate period of time;
3. Having received First Communion, these children are enriched more fully and deeply through continuing catechetical formation;
4. Catechetical instruction is also given to those who are physically or mentally impaired, insofar as their condition permits;
5. 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 or his designee to:

1. Make available to parents and their children information about the activities and ministries provided for all children in the parish (such as children's choir, altar serving, formation and social events) and invite and encourage their active participation;
2. Make available to parents appropriate catechetical materials including the scope, sequence and age-appropriate sections of the *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guide*;
3. Offer to homeschool families the option of participating in the Archdiocesan Faith Knowledge Assessment for a nominal fee.

## The Archbishop 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 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 never supersedes the legitimate teaching authority of the Church. The bishops are "beyond all others the ones primarily responsible for catechesis and are catechists par excellence" (CT, 63b).

## Archdiocesan Office for Catechesis Staff

The Office for Catechesis supports pastors, catechetical leaders and parents in fulfilling their respective responsibilities for catechetical homeschooling, by providing and fostering Christian

discipleship and an awareness of belonging to the larger Catholic Church community. They also support parish-based home religious education through:

1. Archdiocesan policies and guidelines for preparation for and reception of the sacraments;
2. *Forming Disciples for the New Evangelization Archdiocesan Religion Curriculum Guides* for children;
3. Lists of those religion textbooks found to be in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*;
4. Catechist formation guidelines and formation opportunities to assure that all catechists are teaching in conformity with the Magisterium of the Church;
5. A list of recommended resources for homeschooling families.

In addition to a current Catholic study Bible, it is recommended that Catholic homeschool libraries contain and that parents be familiar with at least the following Church documents:

1. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
2. *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*
3. *General Directory for Catechesis*
4. *National Directory for Catechesis*
5. Documents of Vatican II

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

#### Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) and Homeschooling:

The children of all homeschool parish families are welcome to participate in all CYO sports and activities.

Questions about this policy statement should be addressed to the Office for Catechesis  
301-853-5368.